







102/B



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2017 with funding from
Wellcome Library

<https://archive.org/details/b29299731>

PARACELSUS.

LONDON:

Printed by G. Eccles, 101, Fenchurch Street.

PARACELSUS.

BY ROBERT BROWNING.

LONDON :

PUBLISHED BY

EFFINGHAM WILSON, ROYAL EXCHANGE.

MDCCCXXXV.



INSCRIBED

TO

THE COMTE A. DE RIPERT-MONCLAR,

BY HIS AFFECTIONATE FRIEND,

ROBERT BROWNING.

I AM anxious that the reader should not, at the very outset—mistaking my performance for one of a class with which it has nothing in common—judge it by principles on which it was never moulded, and subject it to a standard to which it was never meant to conform. I therefore anticipate his discovery, that it is an attempt, probably more novel than happy, to reverse the method usually adopted by writers whose aim it is to set forth any phenomenon of the mind or the passions, by the operation of persons and events; and that, instead of having recourse to an external machinery of incidents to create and evolve the crisis I desire to produce, I have ven-

87

tured to display somewhat minutely the mood itself in its rise and progress, and have suffered the agency by which it is influenced and determined, to be generally discernible in its effects alone, and subordinate throughout, if not altogether excluded: and this for a reason. I have endeavoured to write a poem, not a drama; the canons of the drama are well known, and I cannot but think that, inasmuch as they have immediate regard to stage representation, the peculiar advantages they hold out are really such only so long as the purpose for which they were at first instituted is kept in view. I do not very well understand what is called a Dramatic Poem, wherein all those restrictions only submitted to on account of compensating good in the original scheme are scrupulously retained, as though for some special fitness in themselves—and all new

facilities placed at an author's disposal by the vehicle he selects, as pertinaciously rejected. It is certain, however, that a work like mine depends more immediately on the intelligence and sympathy of the reader for its success—indeed were my scenes stars it must be his co-operating fancy which, supplying all chasms, shall connect the scattered lights into one constellation—a Lyre or a Crown. I trust for his indulgence towards a poem which had not been imagined six months ago; and that even should he think slightly of the present (an experiment I am in no case likely to repeat) he will not be prejudiced against other productions which may follow in a more popular, and perhaps less difficult form.

15th March, 1835.

Persons.

AUREOLUS PARACELUSUS.

FESTUS & }
MICHAL, } his friends.

APRILE.

*N. B. — For the localities and dates, see the note
at the end.*

Alas ! that it requires too well such free
Forgiving love as shall embalm it there !
For if you would remember me aright—
As I was born to be—you must forget
All fitful, strange, and moody waywardness,
Which e'er confused my better spirit, to dwell
Only on moments such as these, dear friends ;
My heart no truer, but my words and ways
More true to it : as Michal, some months hence,
Will say, this autumn was a pleasant time
For some few sunny days ; and overlook
Its bleak wind, hankering after pining leaves.
Autumn would fain be sunny—I would look
Liker my nature's truth ; and both are frail,
And both beloved for all their frailty !

Mich.

Aureole ! . . .

Par. Drop by drop !—she is weeping like a child !
Not so . . . I am content—more than content—
Nay Autumn wins you best by this its mute
Appeal to sympathy for its decay . . .
Look up, sweet Michal, nor esteem the less
The stain'd and drooping vines their grapes bow down—

Those creaking trees bent with their fruit—and see
That apple-tree with a rare after-birth
Of peeping blooms sprinkled its wealth among;
And for the winds—what wind that ever raved
Shall vex that ash that overlooks the rest,
So proud it wears its berries. Ah! at length,
The old smile meet for her, the lady of this
Sequester'd nest! This kingdom, limited
Alone by one old populous green wall,
Tenanted by the ever-busy flies,
Grey crickets, and shy lizards, and quick spiders,
All families of the silver-threaded moss—
Which look through, near, this way, and it appears
A stubble-field, or a crane-brake—a marsh
Of bulrush whitening in the sun: laugh now!
Fancy the crickets, each one in his house,
Looking out and wondering at the world—or best,
The painted snail, with his gay shell of dew,
Travelling to see the glossy balls high up
Hung by the caterpillar, like gold lamps.

Mick. In truth we have lived carelessly and well!

Par. And shall, my perfect pair—each, trust me, born

For the other—nay your very hair, when mixed,
Is of one hue. For where beside this nook
Shall you two walk, when I am far away,
And wish me prosperous fortune? . . . Stay! that plant
Shall never wave its tangles lightly and softly,
As a queen's languid and imperial arm
Which scatters crowns among her lovers, but you
Shall be reminded to predict some great
Success to me. Ah, see! the sun sinks broad
Behind St. Saviour's . . . wholly gone, at last!

Fest. Now, Aureole, stay those wandering eyes awhile :
You are ours to-night at least; and while you spoke
Of Michal and her tears, I thought that none
Could willing leave what he so seem'd to love . . .
But that last look destroys my dream—that look!
As if where'er you gazed there stood a star!
How far was Würzburg, with its church and spire,
And garden-walls, and all that they contain,
From that look's far alighting?

Par. I but spoke
And look'd alike from simple joy, to see
The beings I best love so well shut in

From all rude chances like to be my lot;
That, far from them, my weary spirit, disposed
To lose awhile its cares in soothing thoughts
Of them, their pleasant features, looks, and words,
Needs never hesitate, nor apprehend
Encroaching trouble may have reach'd them too;
Nor have recourse to Fancy's busy aid
Even to frame a wish in their behalf
Beyond what they possess already here;
But, unobstructed, may at once forget
Itself in them—assured how well they are.
This Festus knows; beside, he holds me one
Whom quiet and its charms arrest in vain;
One scarce aware of all the joys he quits;
Too fill'd with airy hopes to make account
Of soft delights his own heart garners up:
Whereas, behold how much our sense of all
That's beautiful is one! And when he learns
That every common sight he can enjoy
Affects me as himself; that I have just
As varied appetite for joys derived
From common things; a stake in life, in short,

Like his ; and which a rash pursuit of aims
That it affords not would as soon destroy ;—
He may convince himself, that, knowing this,
I shall act well advised : and last, because,
Though heaven and earth, and all things, were at stake,
Sweet Michal must not weep our parting eve.

Fest. True : and the eve is deepening, and we sit
As little anxious to begin our talk
As though to-morrow I could hint of it
As we paced arm in arm the cheerful town
At sun-dawn ; or could whisper it by fits
(Trithemius busied with his class the while)
In that dim chamber where the noon-streaks peer
Half frighten'd by the awful tomes around ;
Or in some grassy lane unbosom all
From even-blush to midnight . . . but to-morrow ! . . .
I have full leave to tell my inmost mind ?
We have been brothers, and henceforth the world
Will be between us . . . all my freest mind ? . . .
'Tis the last night, dear Aureole !

Par.

Oh, say on ;

Devise some test of love—some arduous feat

To be perform'd for you—say on; if night
Be spent the while, the better: recall how oft
My wondrous plans, and dreams, and hopes, and fears,
Have—never wearied you . . . oh, no! . . . as I
Recall, and never vividly as now,
Your true affection, born when Einsiedeln
And its green hills were all the world to us,
And still increasing to this night, which ends
My further stay at Würzburg . . . Oh you shall
Be very proud one day! . . . say on, dear friend;
Talk volumes, I shall still be in arrear.

Fest. In truth? 'Tis for my proper peace, indeed,
Rather than yours—for vain it looks to seek
To stay your course—the last hopes I conceived
Are fading even now. Old stories tell
Of some far embassy despatch'd to win
The favour of an eastern king, and how
The gifts it proffer'd were but dazzling dust
Shed from the ore-beds native to the clime;
Just so, the value of repose and love,
I meant should tempt you, better far than I

You seem to comprehend—and still desist
No whit from projects where they have no part.

Par. Alas! as I forbode, this weighty talk
Has for its end no other than to revive . . .

Fest. A solitary briar the bank puts forth
To save our swan's nest floating out to sea.

Par. Dear Festus, hear me. What is it you wish?
That I should lay aside my heart's pursuit,
Abandon the sole ends for which I live,
Reject God's great commission—and so die!
And still I listen for your true love's sake.
Yet how has grown that love? Even in a long
And patient cherishing of the selfsame spirit
It now would quell—as though a mother should hope
To stay the lusty manhood of the child
Once weak upon her knees. I was not born
Inform'd and fearless from the first, but shrank
From aught which mark'd me out apart from men.
I would have lived their life, and striven their strife—
Eluding Destiny, if that might be—
But you first guided me through doubt and fear,

And taught me to know them and know myself ;
And now that I am strong and full of hope ;
That I can from my soul reject all aims,
Save those your earnest words made plain to me ;
Now, that I touch the brink of my design,
When I would have a triumph in their eyes,
A glad cheer in their voices—Michal weeps,
And Festus ponders gravely !

Fest.

When you shall

Have learn'd my purpose . . .

Par.

Learn'd it ? I can say

Beforehand all this conference will produce.

'Tis this way, Michal, that he uses : first,

Or he declares, or I, the leading points

Of our belief in what is man's true end

And God's apparent will—no two faiths ever

Agreed as ours agree : next, each allows

These points are no mere visionary truths :

But, once determin'd, it remains alone

To act upon them straight as best we may :

Accordingly, I venture to submit

My plan, in lack of better, for pursuing
The path which God's will seems to authorize—
A broad plan, vague and ill defined enough,
But courting censure and imploring aid :
Well—he discerns much good in it, avows
This motive worthy, that hope plausible,
A danger here, to be avoided—there,
An oversight to be repair'd : in fine
Our minds go every way together—all good
Approved by him, I gladly recognize ;
All he counts bad, I thankfully discard ;
And nought forbids me to look up at last
For some stray comfort in his cautious brow—
When, lo ! I learn that, spite of all, there lurks
Some innate and inexplicable germ
Of failure in my schemes ; so that at last
It all amounts to this—the sovereign proof
That we devote ourselves wholly to God
Is in a life as though no God there were :
A life which, prompted by the sad and blind
Folly of man, Festus abhors the most—

But which these tenets sanctify at once—
Though to less subtle wits it seems the same,
Consider it how they may.

Mich. Is it so, Festus ?

He speaks so calmly and kindly—is it so ?

Par. Reject those glorious visions of God's love
And man's design ; laugh loud that he should send
Vast longings to direct us ; or find out
How else they may be satiated : but this
Ambiguous warfare wearies . . .

Fest. Not so much

That you will grant no last leave to your friend,
And for his own sake, not for yours ? I wish
To send my soul in good hopes after you—
Never to sorrow that uncertain words,
Erringly apprehended—a new creed,
Ill understood—begot rash trust in you—
Had share in your undoing.

Par. Choose your party :

Hold or renounce : but meanwhile blame me not
Because I dare to act on your own views—

Nor shrink when they point onward—nor spy out
A peril where they most ensure success . . .

Fest. Prove that to me—but that: that you abide
Within their warrant—nor presumptuous boast
God's labour laid on you; that all you covet
A mortal may expect; and, most of all,
That the strange course you now affect, will lead
To its attainment—and I bid you speed!
And count the minutes till you venture forth.
You will smile; but I had gather'd from slow thought—
Much musing on the fortunes of my friend—
Matter I deem'd could not be urged in vain;
But it all leaves me at my need: in shreds
And fragments I must venture what remains.

Mich. Ask at once, Festus, wherefore he should scorn . . .

Fest. Stay, Michal: Aureole, I speak guardedly
And gravely, knowing well, whate'er your error,
This is no ill-consider'd choice of yours—
No sudden fancy of an ardent boy.
Not from your own confiding words alone
Am I aware your passionate heart has long

Nourish'd, and has at length matured, a plan
To give yourself up wholly to one end.
I will not speak of Einsiedeln; 'twas as
I had been born your elder by some years
Only to watch you fully from the first:
In all beside, our mutual tasks were fix'd
Even then—'twas mine to have you in my view
As you had your own soul: accordingly
I could go further back, and trace each bough
Of this wide-branching tree even to its birth;
Each full-grown passion to its outspring faint;
But I shall only dwell upon the intents
Which fill'd you when, to crown your dearest wish,
With a tumultuous heart, you left with me
Our childhoods' home to join the favour'd few
Whom famed Trithemius condescends to teach
A portion of his lore—and not the dullest
Of those so favour'd, whom you now despise,
Was earnest as you were; resolved, like you,
To grasp all, and retain all, and deserve
By patient toil a wide renown like his.
Now, just as well have I descried the growth

Of this new ardour which supplants the old :
I watch'd it—'twas significant and strange,
In one match'd to his soul's content at length
With rivals in the search for Wisdom's prize,
To see the sudden pause, the total change,
From contest, that transition to repose—
From pressing onward as his fellows press'd,
To a blank idleness; yet most unlike
The dull stagnation of a soul content—
Once foil'd—to leave betimes a thriveless quest :
That careless bearing, free from all pretence
Even of contempt for what it ceased to seek—
Smiling humility, praising much, yet waiving
What it profess'd to praise . . . yet not so well
Secured but that rare outbreaks, fierce and brief,
Reveal'd the hidden scorn—as quickly curb'd . . .
That ostentatious show of past defeat—
That ready acquiescence in contempt—
I deem'd no other than the letting go
His shiver'd sword, of one about to spring
Upon his foe's throat . . . but it was not thus :
Not that way look'd your brooding purpose then ;

But after-signs disclosed, and you confirm'd,
That you prepared to task to the uttermost
Your strength, in furtherance of a certain aim,
Which—while it bore the name your rivals gave
To their most puny efforts—was so vast
In scope that it included their best flights,
Combined them, and desired to gain one prize
In place of many—the secret of the world—
Of man, and man's true purpose, path, and fate :
That you, not nursing as a lovely dream
This purpose, with the sages of old Time,
Have struck upon a way to this, if all
You trust be true, which following, heart and soul,
You, if a man may, dare aspire to KNOW :
And that this aim shall differ from a host
Of aims alike in character and kind—
Mostly in this ; that in itself alone
Shall its reward be—not an alien end
Blending therewith—no hope, nor fear, nor joy,
Nor woe, shall elsewhere move you ; but this pure
Devotion shall sustain or shall undo you :
This you intend.

Par.

You shall not state it thus :

I should not differ from the dreamy crew
You speak of. I profess no other share
In the selection of my lot, than in
My ready answer to the will of God,
Who summons me to be his organ : he
Whose innate strength supports him shall succeed
No better than the sages.

Fest.

Such the aim, then,

God sets before you ; and 'tis doubtless need
That he appoint no less the way of praise
Than the desire to praise ; for, though I hold
With you, the setting forth such praise to be
The natural end and service of a man—
And that such praise seems best attain'd when he
Attains the general welfare of his kind—
Yet, *that*, the *instrument*, is not the *end*.
There is a curse upon the earth ; let man
Presume not to serve God apart from such
Appointed channel as he wills shall gather
Imperfect tributes—for that sole obedience
Valued perchance. He seeks not that his altars

Blaze—careless how, so that they do but blaze.—
Though I doubt much if he consent that we
Discover this great secret I know well
You will allege no other comprehends
The work in question save its labourer :
I shall assume the aim improved ; and you
That I am implicated in the issue
Not simply as your friend, but as yourself—
As though it were my task that you perform,
And some plague dogg'd my heels till it were done.
Suppose this own'd then ; you are born to know.
(You will heed well your answers, for my faith
Shall meet implicitly what they affirm)—
I cannot think you have annex'd to such
Selection aught beyond a steadfast will,
An intense purpose—gifts that would induce
Scorn or neglect of ordinary means
And instruments of success : no destiny
Dispenses with endeavour. Now, dare you search
Your inmost heart, and candidly avow
Whether you have not rather wild desire
For this distinction, than a full assurance

That it exists ; or whether you discern
The path to the fulfilment of your purpose
Clear as that purpose—and again, that purpose
Clear as your yearning to be singled out
For its possessor. Dare you answer this ?

Par. (After a pause.) No ; I have nought to fear ! who
will may know

The secret'st workings of my soul. What though
It be so ?—if indeed the strong desire
Eclipse the aim in me ?—if splendour break
Upon the outset of my path alone,
And duskest shade succeed ? What fairer seal
Shall I require to my authentic mission
Than this fierce energy ?—this instinct striving
Because its nature is to strive ?—enticed
By the security of no broad course—
Where error is not, but success is sure.
How know I else such glorious fate my own,
But in the restless irresistible force
That works within me ? Is it for human will
To institute such impulses ?—still less
To disregard their promptings ? What should I

Do, kept among you all ; your loves, your cares,
Your life—all to be mine ? Be sure that God
Ne'er dooms to waste the strength he deigns impart.
Ask the gier-eagle why she stoops at once
Into the vast and unexplored abyss !
What fullgrown power informs her from the first !
Why she not marvels, strenuously beating
The silent boundless regions of the sky !
Be sure they sleep not whom God needs ; nor fear
Their holding light his charge, when every hour
That finds that charge delay'd is a new death.
Thus for the faith in which I trust ; and hence
I can abjure so well the secret arts
These pedants strive to learn—the magic they
So reverence. I shall scarcely seek to know
If it exist : too intimate a tie
Connects me with our God. A sullen friend
To do my bidding—fallen and hateful sprites
To help me—what are these, at best, beside
God every where, sustaining and directing,
So that the earth shall yield her secrets up
And every object shall be charged to strike,

To teach, to gratify, and to suggest ?
And I am young, Festus, happy and free !
I can devote myself ; I have a life
To give ; I, who am singled out for this.
Think, think ; the wide east, where old Wisdom sprung ;
The bright south, where she dwelt ; the populous north,
All are pass'd o'er—it lights on me. 'T is time
New hopes should animate the world—new light
Should dawn from new revealings to a race
Weigh'd down so long, forgotten so long ; so shall
The heaven reserved for us at last receive
No creatures whom unwonted splendours blind,
But ardent to confront the unclouded blaze
Whose beams not seldom lit their pilgrimage,
Not seldom glorified their life below.

Fest. My words have their old fate and make faint stand
Against your glowing periods ; I renounce
All hope of learning further on this head ;
And what I next advance holds good as well
With one assured that all these things are true ;
For might not such seek out a fast retreat—
After approved example—there to have

Calm converse with the great dead—soul to soul—
Who laid up treasure with the like intent ?
To lift himself into their airy place,
To fill out full their unfulfill'd careers,
Unravelling the knots their baffled skill
Pronounced inextricable, but surely left
Far less confused ? A fresh eye, a fresh hand,
Might do much at their vigour's waning-point—
Succeeding with new-breathed and untried force—
As at old games a runner snatch'd the torch
From runner still ? Such one might well do this.
But you have link'd to this, your enterprize,
An arbitrary and most perplexing scheme
Of seeking it in strange and untried paths ;
Rejecting past example, practice, precept—
That so you may stand aidless and alone :
If in this wild rejection you regard
Mankind and their award of fame—'t is clear,
Whate'er you may protest, knowledge is not
Paramount in your love ; or for her sake
You would collect all help from every source—
Friend, foe, assistant, rival, all would merge

In the broad class of those who show'd her haunts
And those who show'd them not.

Par.

What shall I say?

Festus, from childhood I have been possess'd
By a fire—by a true fire, or faint or fierce,
As from without some master, so it seem'd,
Repress'd or urged its current: this but ill
Expresses what I would convey—but rather
I will believe an angel ruled me thus,
Than that my soul's own workings, own high nature,
So became manifest. I knew not then
What whisper'd in the evening, and spoke out
At midnight. If some mortal, born too soon,
Were laid away in some great trance—the ages
Coming and going all the while—until
His true time's advent, and could then record
The words they spoke who kept watch by his bed,
Then I might tell more of the breath so light
Upon my eyelids, and the fingers light
Among my hair. Youth is confused; yet never
So dull was I but when that spirit pass'd
I turn'd to him, scarce consciously, as turns

A water-snake when fairies cross his sleep :
And having this within me and about me
When Einsiedeln, its hills, and lakes, and plains
Confined me—what oppressive joy was mine
When life grew plain, and I first view'd the throng'd,
The ever-moving, concourse of mankind !
Believe that ere I join'd them—ere I knew
The purpose of the pageant, or the place
Consign'd to me within its ranks—while yet
Wonder was freshest and delight most pure—
'T was then that least supportable appear'd
A station with the brightest of the crowd ;
A portion with the proudest of them all !
And from the tumult in my breast, this only
Could I collect—that I must thenceforth die,
Or elevate myself far, far above
The gorgeous spectacle ; what seem'd a longing
To trample on yet save mankind at once—
To make some unexampled sacrifice
In their behalf—to wring some wondrous good
From heaven or earth for them—to perish, winning
Eternal weal in the act : as who should dare

Pluck out the angry thunder from its cloud,
That, all its gather'd flame discharged on him,
No storm might threaten summer's azure weather—
Yet never to be mix'd with them so much
As to have part even in my own work—share
In my own largess. Once the feat achieved,
I would withdraw from their officious praise,
Would gently put aside their profuse thanks,
Like some knight traversing a wilderness,
Who, on his way, may chance to free a tribe
Of desert-people from their dragon-foe ;
When all the swarthy race press round to kiss
His feet, and choose him for their king, and yield
Their poor tents, pitch'd among the sand-hills, for
His realm ; and he points, smiling, to his scarf,
Heavy with rivel'd gold—his burgonet,
Gay set with twinkling stones—and to the east,
Where these must be display'd . . .

Fest.

Good : let us hear

No more about your nature, “ which first shrank
“ From all that mark'd you out apart from men.”

Par. I touch on it : I would but analyse

That first mad impulse—'t was as brief as fond ;
For as I gazed again upon the show,
I soon distinguish'd here and there a shape
Palm-wreathed and radiant, forehead and full eye.
Well pleased was I their state should thus at once
Interpret my own thoughts :—" Behold the clue
" To all," I rashly said, " and all I pine
" To do, these have accomplish'd : we are peers !
" They know, and therefore rule . . . I too will know ! '
You were beside me, Festus, as you say ;
You saw me plunge in their pursuits whom Fame
Is lavish to attest the lords of mind,
Not pausing to make sure the prize in view
Would satiate my cravings when obtain'd—
But as they strove I strove : then came a slow
And strangling failure. We aspired alike,
Yet not the meanest plodder Tritheim deems
A marvel, but was all-sufficient, well content,
And stagger'd only at his own strong wits ;
While I was restless, nothing satisfied,
Distrustful, most perplex'd. I would slur over
That struggle ; suffice it, that I loathed myself

As weak compared with them, yet felt somehow
A mighty power was brooding, taking shape
Within me ; and this lasted till one night
When, as I sate revolving it and more,
A still voice from without said—" See'st thou not,
" Desponding child, whence springs defeat and loss ?
" Even from thy strength. Know better : hast thou gazed
" Presumptuous on Wisdom's countenance,
" No veil between ; and can thy faltering hands
" Pursue as well the toil their earnest blinking,
" Whom radiance ne'er distracts, so clear describes ?
" If thou wouldst share their fortune, choose their eyes,
" Unfed by splendour. Let each task present
" Its petty good to thee. Waste not thy gifts
" In profitless waiting for the gods' descent,
" But have some idol of thine own to dress
" With their array. Know, not for knowing's sake,
" But to become a star to men for ever.
" Know, for the gain it gets, the praise it brings,
" The wonder it inspires, the love it breeds.
" Look one step onward, and secure that step."
And I smiled as one never smiles but once ;

Then first discovering my aim's extent,
Which sought to comprehend the works of God,
And God himself, and all God's intercourse
With our own mind ; and how such show'd beside
My fellow's studies, whose true worth I saw,
But smiled not, well aware who stood by me.
And softer came the voice—" *There is a way—*
" 'T is hard for flesh to tread therein, imbued
" With weakness—hopeless, if indulgence first
" Have ripen'd inborn sins to strength : wilt thou
" Adventure for my sake and for thy kind's,
" Apart for all reward ? " And last it breathed—
" Be happy, my good soldier ; I am by thee,
" Be sure, even to the end ! " . . . I answer'd not,
Knowing him. As he spoke, I was endued
With comprehension and a steadfast will ;
And when he ceased, my fate was seal'd for ever.
If there took place no special change in me,
How comes it all things wore a different hue
Thenceforward ?—pregnant with vast consequence—
Teeming with grand results—loaded with fate ;
So that when quailing at the mighty range

Of secret truths yearning for birth, I haste
To contemplate undazzled some one truth,
Its bearings and effects alone, at once
What was a speck expands into a star,
Demanding life to be explored alone—
Till I near craze. I go to prove my soul !
I see my way as birds their trackless way—
I shall arrive ! what time, what circuit first,
I ask not : but unless God send his hail
Or blinding fire-balls, sleet, or stifling snow,
In some time—his good time—I shall arrive :
He guides me and the bird. In his good time !

Mich. Vex him no further, Festus ; it is so !

Fest. Just thus you answer ever. This would hold
Were it the trackless air and not a path
Inviting you, distinct with footprints yet
Of many a mighty spirit gone that way.
You may have purer views, for aught I know ;
But they were famous in their day—the proofs
Remain. At least accept the light they lend.

Par. Their light ! the sum of all is briefly this :
They labour'd after their own fashion ; the fruits

Are best seen in a dark and groaning earth,
Given over to a blind and endless strife
With evils their best lore cannot abate.
No ; I reject and spurn them utterly,
And all they teach. Shall I still sit beside
Their dry wells, with white lips and filmed eye,
While in the distance heaven is blue above
Mountains where sleep the unsunn'd tarns ?

Fest.

And yet

As strong delusions have prevail'd ere now :
Men have set out as gallantly to seek
Their ruin ; I have heard of such—yourself
Avow all hitherto have fail'd and fallen.

Mich. Nay, Festus, when but as the pilgrims faint
For the drear way, do you expect to see
Their city dawn amid the clouds afar !

Par. Ay, sounds it not like some old well-known tale ?
For me, I estimate their works and them
So rightly, that at times I well nigh dream
I too have spent a life the selfsame way—
Tread once again an old life's course. Perchance
I perish'd in an arrogant self-reliance

An age ago ; and in that act, a prayer
For one more chance went up so earnest—so
Imbued with better light let in by Death—
So free from all past sin—that it was heard . . .
That life was blotted out—not so completely
But scatter'd wrecks enough remain to wake
Dim memories ; as now, when once more seems
The goal in sight again : all which is foolish
Indeed, and only means—the form I bear,
The earth I tread, are not more clear to me.

Fest. And who am I to challenge and dispute
That clear belief? . . . I will devest all fear.

Mich. Then Aureole is God's commissary ! he shall
Be great and grand—and all for us !

Par.

No, sweet !

Not great or grand. If I can serve mankind
'Tis well—but there our intercourse must end :
I never will be served by those I serve.

Fest. Look well to this ; *here* is a plague-spot, veil it,
Disguise it how you will : 'tis true, you utter
This scorn while by our side and loving us—
'Tis but a spot as yet ; but it will break

Into a hideous blotch if overlook'd.
How can that course be safe which from the first
Produces carelessness to human love ?
I know you have abjured the helps which men
Who overpass their kind, as you would do,
Have humbly sought. I dare not thoroughly probe
This matter, lest I learn too much : let be
That popular praise would little instigate
Your efforts—or particular approval
Reward you ; put reward aside ; you shall
Go forth upon your arduous task alone,
None shall assist you—none partake your toil—
None share your triumph—still you must retain
Some one to trust your glory to ; to share
Your rapture with. Had I been chosen like you
I should encircle me with love—should raise
A rampart of kind wishes ; it should seem
Impossible for me to fail, so watch'd
By gentle friends who made my cause their own ;
They should ward off Fate's envy—the great boon,
Extravagant when claim'd by me alone,
Being a gift to them as well as me.

If ease seduced or danger daunted me,
How calmly their sad eyes should gaze reproach !

Mich. O Aureole, can I sing though all alone,
Without first calling, in my fancy, both
To listen by my side—even I ! And you ?
Do you not feel this ?—say that you feel this !

Par. I feel 'tis pleasant that my aims, at length
Allow'd their weight, should be supposed to need
A further strengthening in these goodly helps !
Once more (since I am forced to speak as one
Who has full liberty at his discretion)
My course allures for its own sake—its sole
Intrinsic worth ; and ne'er shall boat of mine
Adventure forth for gold and apes at once :
Your sages say “ if human, therefore weak : ”
If weak, more need to give myself entire
To my pursuit ; and by its side, all else . . .
No matter : I deny myself but little
In waiving all assistance save its own—
And I regret it ; there 's no sacrifice
To make ; the sages threw so much away,
While I must be content with gaining all.

Fest. But do not cut yourself from human weal !
You cannot thrive—a man that dares affect
To spend his life in service to his kind,
For no reward of theirs, nor bound to them
By any tie ; nor do so, Aureole !
There are strange punishments for such ; although
No visible good flow thence, give up some part
Of your renown to another : so you shall
Hide from yourself that all is for yourself.
Say, say almost to God “ I have done all
“ For her—not for myself ! ”

Par. And who but late,
Was to rejoice in my success like you ?
Whom should I love but you ?

Fest. Nay, I know not :
But know this, you, that 't is no will of mine
You should abjure the lofty claims you make ;
And this the cause—I will no longer seek
To overlook the truth ; that there would be
A monstrous spectacle upon the earth,
Beneath the pleasant sun, among the trees,
A being knowing not what love is. Hear me ;

You are endow'd with faculties which have
Annex'd to them as 't were a dispensation
To summon meaner spirits to do their will,
To gather round them at their need ; inspiring
Such with a love which *they* can never feel—
Passionless midst their passionate votaries.
I know not if you joy in this or no,
Or ever dream that common men live wholly
On objects you so lightly prize, which make
Their heart's sole wealth : the soft affections seem
Beauteous at most to you, which they must taste
Or die : and this strange quality accords,
I know not how, with you ; sits well upon
That luminous brow : though in another it were
An eating brand—a shame. I dare not blame you :
The rules of right and wrong thus set aside,
There's no alternative. I judge you one
Of higher order—under other laws
Than bind us ; therefore curb not one bold glance !
'Tis best aspire. Once mingled with us all

Mich. Stay with us Aureole ! cast those hopes away,
And stay with us : an angel warns me, too,

Man should be humble ; you are very proud !
And God dethroned has doleful plagues for such !
Warns me to have in dread no quick repulse,
No slow defeat, but a complete success !
You will find all you seek, and perish so !

Par. (After a pause.) Are these the barren first fruits
I should fear ?

Is love like this the natural lot of all ?
How many years of hate might one such hour
O'erbalance ? Dearest Michal, dearest Festus,
What shall I say, if not that I desire
Well to deserve that love, and will, dear friends,
In swerving nothing from my high resolves.
See, the great moon ! and 'ere the mottled owls
Were wide awake, I should have made all sure
For my departure that remains to do ;
So answer not, while I run lightly o'er
The topics you have urged to-night. It seems
We acquiesce at last in all, save only
If I am like to compass what I seek
In the untried career I chuse ; and then,
If that career, making but small account

Of much of life's delight, will offer joys
Sufficient to sustain my soul—for thus
I understand these fond fears just express'd.
And first; the lore you praise and I neglect,
The labours and the precepts of old sages,
I have not slightly disesteem'd. But then
Truth is within ourselves; it takes no rise
From outward things, whate'er you may believe:
There is an inmost centre in us all,
Where truth abides in fulness; and around,
Wall within wall, the gross flesh hems it in,
Perfect and true perception—which is truth;
A baffling and perverting carnal mesh
Which blinds it, and makes error: and, "*to know*"
Rather consists in opening out a way
Whence the imprison'd splendour may dart forth,
Than in effecting entry for the light
Supposed to be without. Watch narrowly
The demonstration of a truth, its birth,
And you shall trace the effluence to its spring
And source within us, where broods radiance vast,
To be elicited ray by ray, as chance

Shall favour: *chance*—for hitherto,
Even as we know not how those beams are born,
As little know we what unlocks their lair;
For men have oft grown old among their books
And died, case-harden'd in their ignorance,
Whose careless youth had promised what long years
Of unremitted labour ne'er perform'd:
While, contrary, it has chanced some idle day,
To autumn loiterers just as fancy-free
As the midges in the sun, has oft brought forth
A truth—produced mysteriously as cape
Of cloud grown out of the invisible mist.
Hence, may not truth be lodged alike in all,
The lowest as the highest? some slight film
The interposing bar which binds a soul?
Some film removed the happy outlet whence
It issues proudly? seeing that the soul
Is deathless (we know well) but oftener coop'd
A prisoner and a thrall, than a throned power;
That it strives weakly in the child, is loosed
In manhood, clogg'd by sickness, back compell'd
By age and waste, set free at last by death:

That not alone when life flows still do truth
And power emerge, but also when strange chance
Affects its current; in unused conjuncture,
Where sickness breaks the body—hunger, watching,
Excess, or languor—oftenest death's approach—
Peril, deep joy, or woe. One man shall crawl
Through life, surrounded with all stirring things,
Unmoved—and he goes mad; and from the wreck
Of what he was, by his wild talk alone,
You first collect how great a spirit he hid.
Seeing all this why should I pine in vain
Attempts to win some day the august form
Of Truth to stand before me, and compel
My dark unvalued frame to change its nature,
And straight become suffused with light—at best
For my sole good—leaving the world to seek
Salvation out as it best may, or follow
The same long thorny course? No, I will learn
How to set free the soul alike in all,
By searching out the laws by which the flesh
Accloys the spirit. We may not be doom'd
To cope with seraphs, but at least the rest

Shall cope with us. Make no more giants, God !
But elevate the race at once ! We ask
But to put forth our strength, our human strength,
All starting fairly, all equipp'd alike,
Gifted alike, and eagle-eyed, true-hearted.
See if we cannot beat thy angels yet !
Such is my task. I go to gather this
Mysterious knowledge, here and there dispersed
About the world, long lost or ever-hidden ;
And why should I be sad, or lorn of hope ?
Why ever make man's good distinct from God's ?
Or, finding they are one, why have mistrust ?
Who shall succeed if not one pledged like me ?
Mine is no mad attempt to build a world
Apart from his, like those who set themselves
To find the nature of the spirit they bore,
And, taught betimes that all their gorgeous dreams
And beauteous fancies, hopes, and aspirations,
Were born only to wither in this life,
Refused to curb or moderate their longings,
Or fit them to this narrow sphere, but chose
To figure and conceive another world

And other frames meet for their vast desires,
And all a dream ! Thus was life scorn'd ; but life
Shall yet be crown'd : twine amaranth ! I am priest !
And all for yielding with a lively spirit
A poor existence—parting with a youth
Like theirs who squander every energy
Convertible to good on painted toys,
Breath-bubbles, gilded dust ! And though I spurn
All adventitious aims, from empty praise
To love's award, yet whoso deems such helps
Important and concerns himself for me
May know even these will follow with the rest—
As in the steady rolling Mayne, asleep
Yonder, is mingled and involved a mass
Of schistous particles of ore. And even
My own affections, laid to rest awhile—
Will waken purified, subdued alone
By all I have achieved ; till then—till then . . .
Ah ! the time-wiling loitering of a page
Through bower and over lawn, 'till eve shall bring
The stately lady's presence whom he loves—
The broken sleep of the fisher whose rough coat

Enwraps the queenly pearl—these are faint types !
See, see, they look on me—I triumph now !
Tell me, Festus, Michal, but one thing—I have told
All I shall e'er disclose to mortal . . . now,
Do you believe I shall accomplish this ?

Fest. I do believe !

Mich. And I, dear Aureole !

Par. Those words shall never fade from out my brain.

'Tis earnest of the end—shall never fade !

Are there not Festus, are there not dear Michal,

Two points in the adventure of the diver :

One—when a beggar he prepares to plunge ?

One—when a prince he rises with his pearl ?

Festus, I plunge !

II.—PARACELSUS ATTAINS.

SCENE. *Constantinople.*—" *The House of the Greek.*"

1521.

PARACELSUS.

Par. Over the waters in the vapourous west
The sun goes down as in a sphere of gold
Behind the arm of the city, which between,
Athwart the splendour, black and crooked runs
Like a Turk verse along a scimeter.
There lie, sullen memorial, and no more
Possess my aching sight. 'Tis done at last!
Strange—and the juggles of a sallow cheat
Have won me to this act: 'tis as yon cloud
Should voyage unwreck'd o'er many a mountain-top
And break upon a molehill. I have dared
Come to a pause at last, and scan for once
The heights already reach'd, without regard
To the extent above; fairly compute

All I have clearly gained ; for once excluding
A brilliant future to supply and perfect
All half-gains, and conjectures, and crude hopes—
And all because a fortune-teller wills
His credulous seekers should inscribe thus much
Within this roll : and here, amid the scrawl'd
Uncouth recordings of the dupes of this
Old arch-genethliac, lie my life's results !

A few blurred characters suffice to note
A stranger wander'd long in many lands,
And reap'd the fruit he coveted in a few
Discoveries, as appended here and there,
The fragmentary produce of those toils,
In a dim heap, fact and surmise together
Confusedly mass'd, as when acquired ; he was
Intent on gain to come too much to stay
And scrutinize whate'er was gain'd : the whole
Slipt in the blank space 'twixt an ideot's gibber
And a mad lover's ditty—there it lies.

And yet those blottings chronicle a life—

A whole life, and my life ! nothing to do,
No problem for the fancy, but a life
Spent and decided, wasted past retrieve—
Or worthy beyond a peer. Stay, what does this
Remembrancer set down concerning “ life ? ”
“ ‘ Time fleets, youth fades, life is an empty dream,’
“ It is the echo of time : he whose heart beat
“ First underneath a human heart, whose speech
“ Was copied from a human tongue, can never
“ Recall when he was living yet knew it not :
“ Nevertheless long seasons pass o’er him,
“ Until one hour’s experience shows what nothing
“ It seem’d could clearer show, and ever after
“ An alter’d brow, and eye, and gait, and speech
“ Attest that *now* he *knows* this adage true
“ ‘ Time fleets, youth fades, life is an empty dream.’ ”

Ay, my brave chronicler, and this same hour
As well as any : now, let my time be !

Now ! I can go no farther ; well or ill—

’Tis done. I must desist and take my chance ;

I cannot keep at this ; 'tis no back shrinking—
For let but some assurance beam, some close
To this my toil appear, and I proceed
At any price, though closing it, I die . . .
But here I pause : the old Greek's prophecy
Is like to turn out true—I shall not quit
His chamber 'till I know what I desire.

An end, a rest ! strange how the notion, once
Encounter'd, gathers strength by moments. Rest !
Where has it kept so long ? this throbbing brow
To cease—this beating heart to cease—all cruel
And gnawing thoughts to cease !—to dare let down
My strung, so high-strung brain—to dare unnerve
My harass'd o'ertask'd frame—to know my place,
My portion, my reward, even my failure,
Assign'd, made sure for ever !—to lose myself
Among the common creatures of the world—
To draw some gain from having been a man—
Neither to hope nor fear—to live at length !
Even in failure, rest !—but rest, in truth,
And power, and recompense . . .

'Tis little wonder truly ; things go on
And at their worst they end or mend—'t is time
To look about, with matters at this pass :
Have I insensibly sunk as deep—has all
Been undergone for this ? *this* the request
My labour qualified me to present
With no fear of refusal ? Had I gone
Slightingly through my task, and therefore judged
It fit to moderate my hopes ; nay, were it
My sole concern to exculpate myself—
To flounder through the scrape—I could not chuse
An humbler mood to wait for the event !
No, no, there needs not this ; no, after all,
At worst I have perform'd *my* share of the task.
The rest is God's concern—mine, merely this,
To know that I have obstinately held
By my own work : the mortal whose brave foot
Has trod so far the temple-courts unscathed,
That he descries at length the shrine of shrines,
Must let no sneering of the demon's eyes,
Which he could pass unquailing, fasten now
Upon him, fairly past their power ; no, no,

He must not stagger and fall down at last,
Having a charm to baffle them ; behold,
He bares his front : a mortal ventures thus
Serene amid the echoes, beams, and glooms !
If he be priest henceforth, if he wake up,
The god of the place to ban and blast him there.
Both well ! What's failure or success to me ?
I have subdued my life to the one purpose
Whereto I ordain'd it ; there alone I spy
No doubt ; that way I may be satisfied.
Yes, well have I subdued my life ! beyond
The obligation of my strictest vows,
The contemplation of my wildest bond,
Which gave my nature freely up, in truth,
But in its actual state—consenting fully
All passionate impulses its soil was form'd
To rear, should wither ; but foreseeing not
The tract doom'd to perpetual barrenness
Would seem one day, remember'd as it was
Beside the parch'd sand-tract which now it is,
Already strewn with faint blooms, viewless then.
I ne'er engaged to root up loves so frail

I felt them not, yet now, 'tis very plain
Some soft spots had their birth in me at first—
If not love, say, like love : there was a time
When yet this wolfish hunger after knowledge
Set not remorselessly its claims aside ;
This heart was human once, or why recall
Einsiedeln, even now, and Würzburg, whom the Mayne
Forsakes her course to fold as with an arm ? . . .

And Festus—my poor Festus, with his praise,
And counsel, and grave fears—where is he now ?
With the sweet maiden, long ago his bride ?
I surely loved them—that last night, at least,
When we . . . gone ! gone ! the better : I am saved
The sad review of an ambitious youth,
Choked by vile lusts, unnoticed in their birth,
Which have grown up and wound around a will
Till action was destroy'd. No, I have gone
Purging my path successively of aught
Wearing the distant likeness of such loves.
I have made life consist of one idea :
E're *that* was master—up 'till *that* was born

I bear a memory of a pleasant life
Whose small events I can recall, even to
The morn I ran over the grassy fields
Startling the flocks of nameless birds, to tell
Poor Festus, leaping all the while for joy,
To leave all trouble for my future plans,
For I had just determin'd to become
The greatest and most glorious being on earth.
But since that hour all life has been forgotten.
'Tis as one day—one only step between
The outset and the end: one tyrant all-
Absorbing aim fills up the interval—
One vast unbroken chain of thought, kept up
Throughout a course apparently adverse
To its existence: life, death, light, and shadow,
The shows of the world, were bare receptacles
Or indices of truth to be wrung thence,
Not ministers of sorrow or delight—
A wondrous natural robe in which I went:
For some one truth would dimly beacon me
From mountains rough with pines, and flit and wink
O'er dazzling wastes of frozen snow, and tremble

Into assured light in some branching mine,
Where ripens, swathed in fire, the liquid gold—
Yet all was then o'erlook'd, though noted now.
So much is good, then, in this working sea
Which parts me from that happy strip of land.
But o'er that happy strip a sun shone too !
And fainter gleams it as the waves grow rough,
And still more faint as the sea widens. Last,
I sicken on a dead gulf, streak'd with light
From its own putrifying depths alone !
Then—God was pledged to take me by the hand;
Now—any miserable juggle can bid
My pride depart. All is alike at length :
God may take pleasure in confounding us,
By hiding secrets in the scorn'd and base . . .
I am here, in short : so little have I paused
Throughout. I never glanced behind to know
If I had kept my primal light from wane,
And thus insensibly am—what I am !

Oh, bitter ; very bitter !

And more bitter

To fear a deeper curse, an inner ruin—
Plague beneath plague—the last turning the first
To light beside its darkness. Let me weep
My youth and its brave hopes, all dead and gone,
In tears which burn. Would I were sure to win
Some startling secret in their stead ! a tincture
Of force to flush old age with youth, or breed
Gold, or imprison moonbeams till they change
To opal shafts ! only that, hurling it
Indignant back, I might convince myself
My aims remain'd supreme and pure as ever !
Even now, why not desire, for mankind's sake,
That if I fail, it may be for some fault ;
That, though I sink, another may succeed ?
I cannot ! O God, I am despicable !
Shut out this hideous mockery from my heart ! . . .

"T was politic in you, Aureole, to reject
Single rewards, to ask them in the lump ;
At all events, once launch'd, to hold straight on :
For now 'tis all or nothing. Mighty profit
Your gains will bring if they stop short of such

Full consummation ! As a man, you had
A certain share of strength, and that is gone
Already in the getting these you boast.

Do not they seem to laugh, as who should say—

“ Great master, we are here indeed ; dragg’d forth

“ To light : this hast thou done ; be glad ! now, seek

“ The strength to use which thou hast spent in getting ! ”

And yet ’t is much, surely, ’t is very much,

Thus to have emptied youth of all its gifts,

To feed a fire meant to hold out till morn

Arrived with inexhaustible light ; and lo,

I have heap’d up my last, and day dawns not

And I am left with grey hair, faded hands,

And furrow’d brow. Ha, have I, after all,

Mistaken the wild nursling of my breast ?

Was she who glided through my room of nights ;

Who laid my head on her soft knees, and smooth’d

The damp locks ; whose sly soothings just began

When my sick spirit craved repose awhile . . .

God ! was I fighting Sleep off for Death’s sake ?

God! Thou art Mind! Unto the Master-Mind
Mind should be precious. Spare my mind alone!
All else I will endure: if, as I stand
Here, with my gains, thy thunder smite me down,
I bow me; 'tis thy will, thy righteous will;
I o'erpass life's restrictions, and I die:
And if no trace of my career remain,
Save a thin corpse at pleasure of the wind
In these bright chambers, level with the air,
See thou to it: but if my spirit fail,
My once proud spirit forsake me at the last,
Hast thou done well by me? So do not thou!
Crush not my mind, dear God, though I be crush'd:
Hold me before the frequency of thy seraphs,
And say—"I crush'd him, lest he should disturb
"My law. Men must not know their strength: behold,
"Weak and alone, how he had raised himself!"

But if delusions trouble me—and Thou,
Not seldom felt with rapture in thy help
And stay, throughout my wanderings, dost intend
To work man's welfare through my weak endeavour—

To crown my mortal forehead with a beam
From thine own blinding crown—to smile, and guide
This puny hand, and let the work so framed
Be styled my work—hear me ! I covet not
An influx of new power, an angel's soul :
It were no marvel then—but I have gone
Thus far a man ; let me conclude a man !
Give but one hour of my first energy,
Of that invincible faith—but only one !
I should go over with an eagle-glance
The truths I have, and spy some certain way
To mould them, and complete them, and pursue them !

(After a pause)

Yet God is good : I started sure of that,
And why dispute it now ? I'll not believe
But some undoubted warning long ere this
Had reach'd me : a labarum was not deem'd
Too much for the old founder of these walls.
Then, if my life has not been natural,
It has been monstrous : yet, till late, my course
So ardently engross'd me, that delight,

A pausing and reflecting joy, 'tis plain,
Could find no place in it. 'Tis true, I am worn;
But who clothes summer, who is Life itself?
And then, though after-life to please me now
Must have no likeness to the past, what hinders
Reward from springing out of toil, as changed
As bursts the flower from earth, and root, and stalk?
What use were punishment, unless some sin
Were first detected? let me know that first:
No man could ever offend as I have done . . .

(A voice from within)

Lost, lost! yet come,
With our wan troop make thy home:
Come, come! for we
Will not breathe, so much as breathe
Reproach to thee!
Lost one, come! the last
Who, living, hast life o'erpast,
And all together we
Will ask for us and ask for thee,
Whose trial is past, whose lot is cast

With those who watch but work no more—
Who gaze on life, but live no more :
Yet we chose thee a birth-place
Where the richness ran to flowers . . .
Could'st not sing one song for us ?
Not make one blossom ours—
Not one of the sweet race ?
Anguish ! ever and for ever ;
Still beginning, ending never !
Yet, lost and last one, come !
How could'st understand, alas,
What our pale ghosts strove to say,
As their shades did glance and pass
Before thee, night and day . . .
O come, come !
How shall we clothe, how arm the spirit
Who next shall thy post inherit—
How guard him from thy speedy ruin ?
Tell us of thy sad undoing
Here, where we sit, ever pursuing
Our weary task, ever renewing
Sharp sorrow, far from . . .

(APRILE *enters.*)

Apr. Ha, ha ! our king that wouldst be, here at last ?
Thy hand to mine. Stay, fix thine eyes on mine.
Thou wouldst be king ? Still fix thine eyes on mine.

Par. Ha, ha ! why crouchest not ? am I not king ?
So torture is not wholly unavailing !
Have my fierce spasms compell'd thee from thy lair ?
Ay, look on me ! shall I be king or no ?
I scarcely trusted God with the surmise
That thou wouldst come, and thou didst hear the while !

Apr. Thine eyes are lustreless to mine ; my hair
Is soft, nay silken soft : to talk with thee
Flushes my cheek, and thou art ashy-pale.
Truly thou hast labour'd, hast withstood their lips,
Their kisses. Yes, 't is like thou hast attain'd.
Tell me, dear master, wherefore now thou comest ?
I thought thy solemn songs would have their meed
In after-time ; that I should hear the earth
Exult in thee, and echo with thy praise,
While I was laid forgotten in my grave.

Par. Ah, fiend, I know thee, I am not thy dupe !
Thou art ordain'd to follow in my track,

To reap my sowing—as I disdain'd to reap
The harvest left by sages long since gone.
I am to be degraded, after all,
To an aspirant after fame, not truth—
To all but envy of thy fate, be sure !

Apr. Nay, sing them to me ; I shall envy not :
Thou shalt be king. Sing thou, and I will sit
Beside, and call deep silence for thy songs,
And worship thee, as I had ne'er been meant
To fill thy throne. But none shall ever know !
Sing to me : for already thy wild eyes
Unlock my heart-springs, as some crystal-shaft
Reveals by some chance blaze its parent fount
After long time—so thou reveal'st my soul !
All will flash forth at last, with thee to hear !

Par. (His secret ! I shall get his secret—fool !) I am
The mortal who aspired to KNOW—and thou ?

Apr. I would LOVE infinitely, and be loved !

Par. Poor slave ! I am thy king indeed.

Apr. Thou deem'st
That—born a spirit, dower'd even as thou,
Born for thy fate—because I could not curb

My yearnings to possess at once the full
Enjoyment ; but neglected all the means
Of realizing even the frailest joy ;
Gathering no fragments to appease my want,
Yet nursing up that want till thus I die—
That I cannot conceive thy safe, sure march,
Triumphing o'er the perils that o'erwhelm me,
Neglecting nought below for aught above,
Despising nothing and ensuring all—
That I could not, my time to come again,
Lead this my spirit securely as thine own ;
Listen, and thou shalt see I know thee well :
I would love infinitely . . . Ah, lost ! lost !

How shall I look on all of ye

With your gifts even yet on me . . .

Par. (Ah, 't is some moonstruck creature after all !
Such fond fools as are like to haunt this den) :

I charge thee, by thy fealty, be calm ;
Tell me what thou wouldst be, and what I am.

Apr. I would love infinitely, and be loved.
First : I would carve in stone, or cast in brass,
The forms of earth. No ancient hunter lifted

Up to the gods by his renown ; no nymph
Supposed the sweet soul of a woodland tree,
Or sapphirine spirit of a twilight star,
Should be too hard for me ; no shepherd-king,
Regal for his white locks ; no youth who stands
Silent and very calm amid the throng,
His right hand ever hid beneath his robe
Until the tyrant pass ; no law-giver ;
No swan-soft woman, rubb'd with lucid oils,
Given by a god for love of her—too hard.
Every passion sprung from man, conceived by man,
Would I express and clothe in its fit form,
Or show repress'd by an ungainly form,
Or blend with others struggling in one form.
Oh, if you marvell'd at some mighty spirit
With a fit frame to execute his will—
Even unconsciously to work his will—
You should be moved no less beside some strong,
Rare spirit, fetter'd to a stubborn body,
Endeavouring to subdue it, and inform it
With its own splendour ! All this I would do,
And I would say, this done, “ His sprites created,

“ God grants to each a sphere to be his world,
“ Appointed with the various objects needed
“ To satisfy his own peculiar wants ;
“ So, I create a world for these my shapes
“ Fit to sustain their beauty and their strength !”

And, at the word, I would contrive and paint
Woods, valleys, rocks, and plains, dells, sands, and wastes,
Lakes which when morn breaks on their quivering bed
Blaze like a wyvern flying round the sun ;
And ocean-isles so small, the dog-fish tracking
A dead whale, who should find them, would swim thrice
Around them, and fare onward—all to hold
The offspring of my brain. Nor these alone—
Bronze labyrinths, palace, pyramid, and crypt,
Baths, galleries, courts, temples, and terraces,
Marts, theatres, and wharfs—all fill'd with men !
Men everywhere ! And this perform'd, in turn,
When those who look'd on pined to hear the hopes,
And fears, and hates, and loves which moved the crowd,
I would throw down the pencil as the chisel,
And I would speak : no thought which ever stirr'd
A human breast should be untold ; all passions,

All soft emotions, from the turbulent stir
Within a heart fed with desires like mine—
To the last comfort, shutting the tired lids
Of him who sleeps the sultry noon away
Beneath the tent-tree by the way-side well :
And this in language as the need should be,
Now pour'd at once forth in a burning flow,
Now piled up in a grand array of words.
This done, to perfect and consummate all,
Even as a luminous haze links star to star,
I would supply all chasms with music, breathing
Mysterious motions of the soul, no way
To be defined save in strange melodies.
Last, having thus reveal'd all I could love,
Having received all love bestow'd on it,
I would die : having preserved throughout my course
God full on me, as I was full on men.
He would approve my prayer—" I have gone through
" The loveliness of life, create for me
" If not for men—or take me to thyself,
" Eternal, infinite Love !"

If thou hast ne'er

Conceived this mighty aim, this full desire,
Thou hast not pass'd my trial, and thou art
No king of mine.

Par. Ah me !

Apr. But thou art here !

Thou didst not gaze like me upon that end
Till thine own powers for compassing the bliss
Were blind with glory ; nor grow mad to grasp
At once the prize long patient toil should claim ;
Nor spurn all granted short of that. And I
Would do as thou, if that might be ; nay, listen—
Knowing ourselves, our world, our task so great,
Our time so brief ; 't is clear if we refuse
The means so limited, the tools so rude
To execute our purpose, life will fleet,
And we shall fade, and nothing will be done.
We will be wise in time : what though our work
Be fashion'd in despite of their ill-service,
Be crippled every way ? 'T were little praise
Did full resources wait on our good will
At every turn. Let all be as it is.
Some say the earth is even so contrived

That tree, and flower, a vesture gay, conceal
A bare and skeleton framework : had we means
Answering to our mind ! But now I seem
Wreck'd on a savage isle. How rear thereon
My palace ? Branching palms the props shall be,
Fruit glossy mingling ; gems are for the east ;
Who heeds them ? I can pass them. Serpent's scales,
And painted birds' down, furs, and fishes' skins
Must help me ; and a little here and there
Is all I can aspire to : still my art
Shall show its birth was in a gentler clime.
“ Had I green jars of malachite, this way
“ I 'd range them : where those sea-shells glisten above,
“ Cressets should hang, by right : this way we set
“ The purple carpets, as these mats are laid,
“ Woven of fern and rush and blossoming flag.”
Or if, by fortune, some completer grace
Be spared to me, some fragment, some slight sample
Of the prouder workmanship my own home boasts,
Some trifle little heeded there, but *here*
The one perfection of the place, how gladly
Would I enshrine the relic—cheerfully

Foregoing all the marvels out of reach—
Could I retain one strain of all the psalm
Of the angels—one word of the fiat of God—
To let my followers know what such things are !
I would adventure nobly for their sakes :
When nights were still, and still the moaning sea,
And far away I could descry the land
Whence I departed, whither I return,
I would dispart the waves, and stand once more
At home, and load my bark, and hasten back,
And fling my gains to them, worthless or true.
“ Friends,” I would say, “ I went far, far for them,
“ Past the high rocks the haunt of doves, the mounds
“ Of red earth from whose sides strange trees grow out,
“ Past tracts of milk-white minute blinding sand,
“ Till, by a mighty moon, I tremblingly
“ Gather’d these magic herbs, berry and bud,
“ In haste—not pausing to reject the weeds,
“ But happy plucking them at any price.
“ To me, who have seen them bloom in their own soil,
“ They are scarce lovely : plait and wear them you !
“ And guess from what they are the springs that fed them,

“ The stars that sparkled o’er them, night by night,

“ The snakes that travell’d far to sip their dew !”

Thus for my higher loves ; and thus even weakness

Would win me honour. But not these alone

Should claim my care ; for common life, its wants

And ways, would I set forth in beauteous hues :

The lowest hind should not possess a hope,

A fear, but I ’d be by him, saying better

Than he his own heart’s language. I would live

For ever in the thoughts I thus explored,

As a discoverer’s memory is attach’d

To all he finds : they should be mine henceforth,

Imbued with me, though free to all before ;

For clay, once cast into my soul’s rich mine

Should come up crusted o’er with gems : nor this

Would need a meaner spirit, than the first :

Nay, ’t would be but the selfsame spirit, clothed

In humbler guise, but still the selfsame spirit—

As one spring wind unbinds the mountain snow,

And comforts violets in their hermitage.

But master, poet, who hast done all this,

How didst thou 'scape the ruin I have met ?
Didst thou, when nerving thee to this attempt,
Ne'er range thy mind's extent, as some wide hall,
Dazzled by shapes that fill'd its length with light,
Shapes cluster'd there to rule thee, not obey—
That will not wait thy summons, will not rise
Singly, nor when thy practised eye and hand
Can well transfer their loveliness, but are
By thee for ever, bright to thy despair ?
Didst thou ne'er gaze on each by turns, and ne'er
Resolve to single out *one*, though the rest
Should vanish, and to give that one, entire
In beauty, to the world ; and to forget
Its peers, whose number baffles mortal power ?
And, this determined, wert thou ne'er seduced
By memories, and regrets, and passionate love,
To glance once more farewell ? and did their eyes
Fasten thee, brighter and more bright, until
Thou couldst but stagger back unto their feet,
And laugh that man's applause or welfare ever
Could tempt thee to forsake them ? Or when years
Had pass'd, and still their love possess'd thee wholly ;

When from without some murmur startled thee
Of darkling mortals, famish'd for one ray
Of thy so-hoarded luxury of light,
Didst thou ne'er strive even yet to break their spells,
To prove that even yet thou couldst fulfil
Thy early mission, long ago renounced,
And, to that end, select some shape once more ?
And did not mist-like influences, thick films,
Faint memories of the rest, so long before
Thine eyes, fast float, confuse thee, bear thee off,
As whirling snow-drifts blind a man who treads
A mountain ridge, with guiding spear, through storm ?
Didst not perceive, spoil'd by the subtle ways
Of intricate but instantaneous thought,
That common speech was useless to its ends—
That language, wedded from the first to thought,
Will strengthen as it strengthens ; but, divorced,
Will dwindle, while thought widens more and more ? . . .
Say, though I fell, I had excuse to fall ;
Say I was tempted sorely. Say but this,
Dear lord, Aprile's lord !

Par.

Clasp me not thus,

Aprile! . . . That the truth should reach me thus!

We are weak dust. Nay, clasp not, or I faint!

Apr. My king! and envious thoughts could outrage
thee!

Lo, I forget my ruin, and rejoice

In thy success, as thou! Let our God's praise

Go bravely through the world at last! What care

Through me or thee? I feel thy breath . . . why tears?

Tears in the darkness—and from thee to me?

Par. Love me henceforth, Aprile, while *I* learn
To love; and, merciful God, forgive us both!

We wake at length from weary dreams; but both
Have slept in fairy-land. Though dark and drear
Appears the world before us, we no less

Wake with our wrists and ancles jewell'd still.

I, too, have sought to KNOW as thou to LOVE—

Excluding love as thou refused'st knowledge.

Still thou hast beauty and I power. We wake:

What penance canst devise for both of us?

Apr. I hear thee faintly . . . the thick darkness! Even
Thine eyes are hid. 'T is as I knew: I speak,

And now I die. But I have seen thy face !
 O, dear soul, think of me, and sing of me . . .
 But to have seen thee, and to die so soon !

Par. Die not, Aprile : we must never part.
 Are we not halves of one dissever'd world,
 Whom this strange chance unites once more ? Part ?
 never !

Till thou, the lover, know ; and I, the knower,
 Love—until both are saved. Aprile, hear !
 God, he will die upon my breast ! Aprile !

Apr. To speak but once, and die ! yet by his side.
 Hush ! hush !

Ha ! go you ever girt
 With phantoms, powers ? I have created such,
 But these seem real as I . . .

Par. Whom can you see
 Through the accursed darkness ?

Apr. Stay ; I know,
 I know them : who should know them well as I ?—
 White brows, lit up with glory ; poets all !

Par. Let him but live, and I have my reward !

Apr. Yes ; I see now—God is the PERFECT POET,
Who in his person acts his own creations.

Had you but told me this at first ! . . . Hush ! hush !

Par. Live ! for my sake, because of my great sin,
To help my brain, oppress'd by these wild words
And their deep import. Live ! 't is not too late :
I have a quiet home for us, and friends.
Michal shall smile on you . . . Hear you ? Lean thus,
And breathe my breath : I shall not lose one word
Of all your speech—one little word, Aprile.

Apr. No, no . . . Crown *me* ? I am not one of you !
'T is he, the king, you seek. I am not one . . .

Par. Thy spirit, at least, Aprile, let *me* love ! . . .

I HAVE ATTAIN'D, AND NOW I MAY DEPART.

III.—PARACELSUS.

SCENE—*A chamber in the house of Paracelsus at Basil.*

1526.

PARACELSUS, FESTUS.

Par. Heap logs, and let the blaze laugh out.

Fest.

True, true ;

'T is very fit all time, and chance, and change
Have wrought since last we sate thus, face to face
And soul to soul—all cares, far-looking fears,
Vague apprehensions, all vain fancies bred
By your long absence, should be cast away,
Forgotten in this glad unhop'd renewal
Of our affections.

Par.

Oh, omit not aught

Which witnesses your own and Michal's own
Affection ; spare not that ! forget alone
The honours and the glories, and what not,

That you are pleased to tell profusely out.

Fest. Nay, even your honours in a certain sense.

The wondrous Paracelsus—the dispenser
Of life, the commissary of Fate, the idol
Of princes, is no more than Aureole still—
Still Aureole and my friend, as when we parted
Some twenty years ago, when I restrain'd
As I best could the promptings of my spirit,
Which secretly advanced you from the first
To the pre-eminent rank which since your own
Adventurous ardour, nobly triumphing,
Has won for you.

Par. Yes, yes; and Michal's face
Still wears that quiet and peculiar light,
Like the dim circlet floating round a pearl?

Fest. Just so.

Par. And yet her calm sweet countenance,
Though saintly, was not sad; for she would sing
Alone . . . Does she still sing alone, bird-like,
Not dreaming you are near? Her carols dropt
In flakes through that old leafy bower built under
The sunny wall at Würzburg, from her lattice

Among the trees above, while I, unseen,
Sate conning some rare roll from Tritheim's shelves,
Much wondering notes so simple could divert
My mind from study. Those were happy days!
Respect all such as sing when all alone.

Fest. Scarcely alone—her children, you may guess,
Are wild beside her . . .

Par. Ah, those children quite
Unsettle the pure picture in my mind :
A girl—she was so perfect, so distinct . . .
No change, no change! Not but this added grace
May blend and harmonize with its compeers,
And Michal may become her mother-hood ;
But 't is a change—and I detest all change,
And most a change in aught I loved long since :
But Michal . . . you have said she thinks of me ?

Fest. O very proud will Michal be of you !
Imagine how we sate, long winter-nights,
Scheming and wondering—shaping your presumed
Adventure, or devising your reward ;
Shutting out fear as long as hope might be—
For it was strange how, even when most secure

In our domestic peace, a certain dim
And flitting shade could sadden all ; it seem'd
A restlessness of heart, a silent yearning,
A sense of something wanting, incomplete—
Not to be put in words, perhaps avoided
By mute consent—but felt no less, when traced,
To point to one so loved and so long lost ;
Not but, to balance fears, were glowing hopes.
How you would laugh should I recount them now !
I still predicted your return at last,
With gifts beyond the greatest of them all,
All Tritheim's wondrous troop ; did one of which
Attain renown by any chance, I smiled—
As well aware of who would prove his peer.
Michal was sure that long ere this some being,
As beautiful as you were brave, had loved . . .

Par. Far-seeing, truly, to discern as much
In the fantastic projects and day-dreams
Of a raw, restless boy.

Fest. Oh no, the sunrise
Well warranted our faith in this full noon :
Have I forgotten the anxious voice that said

“ Festus, have thoughts like these e’er shaped themselves
 “ In other brains than mine—have their possessors
 “ Existed in like circumstance—were they weak
 “ As I—or ever constant from the first,
 “ Despising youth’s allurements, and rejecting
 “ As spider-films the shackles I endure ?
 “ Is there hope for me ?”—and I answer’d gravely
 As an acknowledged elder, calmer, wiser,
 More gifted mortal. O you must remember,
 For all your glorious . . .

Par. Glorious ? ay, to wit, this hair,
 These hands—nay, touch them, they are mine—recall
 With all the said recallings, times when thus
 To lay them by your own ne’er turn’d you pale,
 As now. Most glorious, are they not ?

Fest. Why . . . why . . .
 Something must be subtracted from success
 So wide, no doubt. He would be scrupulous, truly,
 Who should object such drawbacks. Still, still Aureole,
 You *are* changed—very changed. ’Twere losing nothing
 To look well to it : you must not be stolen
 From the enjoyment of your well-won meed.

Par. My friend ! you seek my pleasure, past a doubt :
You will best gain your point by talking, not
Of me, but of yourself.

Fest. Have I not said
All touching Michal and my children? Sure
You know, by this, full well how Annchen looks
Gravely, while one disparts her thick brown hair;
And Aureole's glee when some stray gannet builds
Amid the birch-trees by the lake. Small hope
Have I that he will honour, the wild imp!
His namesake. Sigh not! 't is too much to ask
That all we love should reach the same proud fate.
But you are very kind to humour me
By showing interest in my quiet life;
You, who of old could never tame yourself
To tranquil pleasures, must at heart despise . . .

Par. Festus, strange secrets are let out by Death,
Who blabs so oft the follies of this world :
I, as you know, am Death's familiar oft.
I help'd a man to die, some few weeks since,
Warp'd even from his go-cart to one end—
To live on prince's smiles, reflected from

A mighty herd of favourites. No mean trick
He left untried, and truly well nigh worm'd
All traces of God's finger out of him.
He died, grown old; and just an hour before—
Having lain long with blank and soulless eyes—
He sate up suddenly, and with natural voice
Said, that in spite of thick air and closed doors
God told him it was June; and he knew well,
Without such telling, hare-bells grew in June;
And all that kings could ever give or take
Would not be precious as those blooms to him.
Just so, allowing I am passing wise,
It seems to me much worthier argument
Why pansies,* eyes that laugh, are lovelier
Than violets, eyes that dream—(your Michal's choice)—
Than all fools find to wonder at in me,
Or in my fortunes: and be very sure
I say this from no prurient restlessness—
No self-complacency—itching to vary,
And turn, and view its pleasure from all points,

* *Citrinula (flammula) herba Paracelso multum familiaris.* DORN.

And, in this instance, willing other men
Should be at pains to demonstrate to it
The realness of the very joy it lives on.
What should delight me like the news of friends
Whose memories were a solace to me oft,
As mountain-baths to wild fowls in their flight ?
Oftener that you had wasted thought on me
Had you been sage, and rightly valued bliss ;
But there's no taming nor repressing hearts :
God knows I need such ! . . . So you heard me speak ?

Fest. Speak ? when ?

Par. When but this morning at my class ?

There was noise and crowd enough. I saw you not :
Surely you know I am engaged to fill
The chair here ? that 't is part of my proud fate
To lecture to as many thick-scall'd youths
As please to throng the theatre each day,
To my great reputation, and no small
Peril of benches, long unused to crack
Beneath such honour ?

Fest. I was there, indeed.

I mingled with the throng : shall I avow

Small care was mine to listen ? I was intent
On gathering from the murmurs of the crowd
A full corroboration of my hopes.
What can *I* learn about your powers ? but *they*
Know, care for nought beyond your actual state—
Your actual value. Yet they worship you !
Those various natures whom you sway as one.
But ere I go, be sure I shall attend . . .

Par. Stop, o' God's name : the thing's by no means yet
Past remedy. Shall I read this morning's labour ?
At least in substance ? Nought so worth the gaining
As an apt scholar : thus then, with all due
Precision and emphasis—(you, besides, are clearly
Guiltless of understanding more a whit
The subject than your stool—allow'd to be
A notable advantage) . . .

Fest. Surely, Aureole,
You laugh at me !

Par. I laugh ? Ha, ha ! thank heaven,
I charge you, if 't be so ! for I forget
Much—and what laughter should be like : no less,
However, I forego that luxury,

Since it offends the friend who brings it back.
True, laughter like my own must echo strangely
To thinking men ; a smile were better far—
So make me smile, if the exulting look
You wore but now be smiling. 'T is so long
Since I have smiled ! alas, such smiles are born
Alone of hearts like yours, and those old herds'
Of ancient time, whose eyes, calm as their flocks,
Saw in the stars mere garnishry of heaven,
And in the earth a stage for altars only.

Never change, Festus : I say, never change !

Fest. My God, if he be wretched after all !

Par. When last we parted, Festus, you declared,
Or Michal—yes, *her* soft lips whisper'd what
I have preserved : she told me she believed
I should succeed (meaning, that in the search
I then engaged in I should meet success),
And yet be wretched : now, she augur'd false.

Fest. Thank heaven ! but you spoke strangely ! could

I venture

To think bare apprehension lest your friend,
Dazzled by your resplendent course, should find

Henceforth less sweetness in his own, could move
Such earnest mood in you ? Fear not, dear friend,
That I shall leave you, inwardly repining
Such lot was not my own

Par.

And this for ever !

For ever ! gull who may, they will be blind !
They will not look nor think—'t is nothing new
In *them* : but surely *he* is not of them !
My Festus, do you know I reckon'd *you*—
Though all beside were sand-blind—you, my friend,
Would look at me, once close, with piercing eye,
Untroubled by false glare that well confounds
A weaker vision ; would remain serene,
Though singular, amid a gaping throng.
I fear'd you, or I had come, sure, long ere this,
To Einsiedeln. Well, error has no end,
And Rhasis is a sage, and Basil boasts
A tribe of wits, and I am wise and blest
Past all dispute ! 'T is vain to fret at it :
I have vow'd long ago my worshippers
Shall owe to their own deep sagacity
All further information, good or bad.

Small risk indeed my reputation runs,
Unless perchance the glance now searching me
Be fix'd much longer—for it seems to spell
Dimly the characters a simpler man
Might read distinct enough. Old eastern books
Say the fallen prince of morning some short space
Remain'd unchanged in seeming—nay, his brow
Was hued with triumph : every spirit then
Praising ; *his* heart on flame the while . . . a tale !
Well, Festus, what discover you, I pray ?

Fest. Some foul deed sullies then a life which else
Were raised above . . .

Par. Good : I do well—most well !
Why strive to make them know, and feel, and fret
Themselves with what 't is past their power to know,
Or feel, or comprehend ? Still, having nursed
The faint surmise that one yet walk'd the earth,
One, at least, not the utter fool of show,
Not absolutely form'd to be the dupe
Of shallow plausibilities alone ;
One who, in youth found wise enough to choose
That happiness his riper years approve,

Was yet so anxious for another's sake
That ere his friend could rush upon a mad
And ruinous course, the converse of his own,
His gentle spirit had already tried
The perilous path, foreseen its destiny,
And warn'd the weak one in such tender words—
Such accents—his whole heart in every one—
That they oft served to comfort him, in hours
When they, by right, should have increased despair:
Having believed, I say, such happy one
Could never lose the light thus from the first
His portion—I cannot refuse to grieve
Even at my gain if it disturb our old
Relation; if it make *me* out the wiser.
Therefore, once more reminding him how well
He prophesied, I note the single flaw
That seems to cross his title: in plain words
You were deceived, and thus were you deceived:
I have not been successful, and yet am
Most miserable; 'tis said at last; nor you
Give credit, lest you force me to believe
That common sense yet lives upon the world.

Fest. You surely do not mean to banter me ?

Par. You know, or (if you have been wise enough
To cleanse your memory of such matters) knew,
As far as words of mine could make it clear,
That 't was my purpose to find joy or grief
Alone in the fulfilment of my plan,
Or plot, or whatsoe'er it was : rejoicing
Alone as it proceeded prosperously ;
Sorrowing then only, when mischance retarded
Its progress. Nor was this the scheme of one
Enamour'd of a lot unlike the world's,
And thus far sure from common casualty—
(Folly of follies !) in that, thus, the mind
Became the only arbiter of fate.
No ; what I term'd and might conceive my choice,
Already had been rooted in my soul—
Had long been part and portion of myself.
Not to prolong a theme I thoroughly hate,
I have since follow'd it with all my strength ;
And having fail'd therein most signally,
Cannot object to ruin, utter and drear
As all-excelling would have been the prize

Had fortune favour'd me. I scarce have right
To vex your frank good spirit, late so glad
In my supposed prosperity, I know ;
And were I lucky in a glut of friends
Would well agree to let your error live,
And strengthen it with fables of success.
But I 'm in no condition to refuse
The transient solace of so rare a Godsend,
My solitary luxury—my one friend ;
Accordingly I venture to put off
The wearisome vest of falsehood galling me,
Secure when he is by. I lay me bare
And at his mercy—but he is my friend !
Not that he needs retain his grave respect—
That answers not my purpose ; for 't is like,
Some sunny morning—Basil being drain'd
Of its wise population, every corner
Of the amphitheatre cramm'd with learned clerks,
Here Œcolampadius, looking worlds of wit ;
Here Castellanus, as profound as he ;
Munsterus here, Frobenius there ; all squeezed
And staring—that the zany of the show,

Even Paracelsus, shall put off before them
His trappings with a grace not seldom judged
Expedient in such cases. The grim smile
That will go round ! Is it not therefore best
To venture a rehearsal like the present
In a small way ? Where are the signs I seek,
The first-fruits and fair sample of the scorn
Due to all quacks ? Why, this will never do !

Fest. These are foul vapours, Aureole ; nought beside !
The effect of watching, study, weariness.
Were there a spark of truth in the confusion
Of these wild words, you would not outrage thus
Your youth's companion. I shall ne'er regard
These wanderings, bred of faintness and much study.
'Tis not thus you would trust a trouble to me,
To Michal's friend.

Par. I have said it, dearest Festus :
For the manner—'tis ungracious, probably ;
You may have it told in broken sobs, one day,
And scalding tears, ere long. I thought it best
To keep that off as long as possible.
Do you wonder still ?

Fest.

No; it must oft fall out

That he whose labour perfects any work
Shall rise from it with eye so worn, that he
Least of all men can measure the extent
Of that he has accomplish'd. He alone,
Who, nothing task'd, is nothing weary, *he*
Can clearly scan the little he has done :
But we, the bystanders, untouch'd by toil,
We estimate aright.

Par.

This, worthy Festus,

Is one of them, at last ! 'T is so with all :
First they set down all progress as a dream,
And next, when he, whose quick discomfiture
Was counted on, accomplishes some few
And doubtful steps in his career, behold
They look for every inch of ground to vanish
Beneath his tread—so sure they spy success !

Fest. Few doubtful steps ? when death retires before

Your presence—when the noblest of mankind,
Broken in body, yet untired in spirit,
May through your skill renew their vigour, raise
The shatter'd frame to pristine stateliness :

When men in racking pain may purchase dreams
Of what delights them most—swooning at once
Into a sea of bliss, or rapt along
As in a flying sphere of turbulent light :
When we may look to you as one ordain'd
To free the flesh from fell disease, as frees
Our Luther's burning tongue the fetter'd soul :
When . . .

Par. And when and where the devil did you get
This notable news ?

Fest. Even from the common voice ;
From those whose envy, daring not dispute
The wonders it decries, attributes them
To magic and such folly.

Par. Folly ? Why not
To magic, pray ? You find a comfort doubtless
In holding God ne'er troubles him about
Us or our doings : once we were judged worth
The devil's tempting . . . I offend : forgive me,
And rest content. Your prophecy on the whole
Was fair enough as prophesyings go ;
At fault a little in detail, but quite

Precise enough in the main ; and hereupon
I pay due homage : you guess'd long ago
(The prophet) I should fail—and I have fail'd.

Fest. You mean to tell me, then, the hopes which fed
Your youth have not been realized as yet ?
Some obstacle has barr'd them hitherto,
Or that their innate . . .

Par. As I said but now,
You have a very decent prophet's fame .
So you but shun these details. Little matters
Whether those hopes were mad, and what they sought
Safe and secure from all ambitious fools,
Or whether my weak wits are overcome
By what a better spirit would scorn—I fail.
And now methinks 't were best to change the theme.
I am a sad fool to have stumbled on it.
I say confusedly what comes uppermost ;
But there are times when patience proves at fault,
As now : this morning's strange encounter—you
Beside me once again ! you, whom I guess'd
Alive—since hitherto (with Luther's leave)
No friend have I among the saints above—

(The poor mad poet is howling by this time)—
I could not quite repress the varied feelings
This meeting wakens; they have had their way,
And now forget them. Do the rear-mice still
Hang like a fret-work on the gate (or what
In my time was a gate) fronting the road
From Einsiedeln to Lachen?

Fest.

Trifle not :

Answer me—for my sake alone. You smiled
Just now, when I supposed some deed unworthy
Yourself might blot the else so bright result;
But if your motives have continued pure,
Your earnest will unfaltering: if you still
Remain unchanged, and if, in spite of all,
You have experienced the defeat you tell—
I say not, you would cheerfully resign
The contest—mortal hearts are not so fashion'd—
But surely you would ne'ertheless resign.
You sought not fame, nor gain, nor even love;
No end distinct from knowledge. I repeat
Your very words: once satisfied that knowledge
Is a mere dream, you would announce as much

Yourself the first. But how is the event ?

You are defeated—and I find you *here* !

Par. As though “*here*” did not signify defeat !

I spoke not of my labours *here*—past doubt

I am quite competent to answer all

Demands, in any such capacity—

But of the break-down of my general aims :

For you, aware of their extent and scope,

To look on these sage lecturings, commended

By silly beardless boys, and bearded dotards,

As a fit consummation of those aims,

Is worthy notice—a professorship

At Basil ! Since you see so much in it ;

Since 'tis but just my life should have been drain'd

Of its delights to render me a match

For duties arduous as such post demands ;

Far be it from me to deny my power

To fill the petty circle lotted out

Of infinite space, or to deserve the host

Of honours thence accruing : so take notice.

This jewel dangling from my neck preserves

The features of a prince my skill restored

To plague his people some few years to come :
And all through a pure whim. He had eased the earth
For me, but that the droll despair which seized
The vermin of his household, tickled me.
I came to see : here, drivell'd the physician,
Whose most infallible nostrum was at fault ;
There shook the astrologer in his shoes, whose grand
Horoscope promised further score of years ;
Here a monk fumbled at the sick man's nose
With some undoubted relic—a sudary
Of the Virgin ; while some half-dozen knaves
Of the same brotherhood (he loved them ever)
Were making active preparations for
Such a suffumigation as, once fired,
Had stunk the patient dead ere he could groan.
I cursed the doctor, and upset the wiper ;
Brush'd past the conjurer ; vow'd that the first gust
Of stench from the ingredients just alight
Would raise a cross-grain'd devil in my sword,
Not easily laid ; and ere an hour the prince
Slept as he never slept since prince he was.
A day—and I was posting for my life,

Placarded through the town as one whose spite
Had near avail'd to stop the bless'd effects
Of the doctor's nostrum, which, well seconded
By the sudary, and most by the costly smoke—
Not leaving out the strenuous prayers sent up
Hard by, in the abbey—raised the prince to life ;
To the great reputation of the sage,
Who, confident, expected all along
The glad event—the doctor's recompense—
Much largess from his highness to the monks—
And the vast solace of his loving people,
Whose general satisfaction to increase,
The prince was pleased no longer to defer
The burning of some dozen heretics,
Remanded 'till God's mercy should be shown
Touching his sickness : last of all, were join'd
Ample directions to all loyal folk
To seize myself, to swell the complement,
Who—doubtless some rank sorcerer—had endeavour'd
To thwart these pious offices, obstruct
The prince's cure, and frustrate all, by help
Of certain devils dwelling in his sword :

By luck, the prince in his first fit of thanks
Had forced this bauble on me as an earnest
Of further favours. This one case may serve
To give sufficient taste of many such,
So let them pass : those shelves support a pile
Of patents, licenses, diplomas, got
In France, and Spain, and Italy, as well
As Germany ; they authorize my claims
To honour from the world. Nevertheless
I set more store by this Erasmus sends ;
He trusts me : our Frobenius is his friend,
And him I raised (nay, read it) from the dead . . .
I weary you, I see ; I merely sought
To show there's no great wonder after all
That while I fill the class-room, and attract
A crowd to Basil, I have leave to stay ;
And that I need not scruple to accept
The utmost they can offer—if I love it :
For 'tis but right the world should be prepared
To treat especially the several wants
Of one like me, used up in serving her ;
Just as the mortal, whom the Gods in part

Devour'd, received in place of his lost limb
Some virtue or other—cured disease, I think ;
You mind the fables we have read together.

Fest. You do not think I comprehend a word :
The time was, Aureole, when you were not slow
To clothe the airiest thoughts in specious words ;
But surely you must feel how vague and strange
These speeches sound.

Par. Well, then : you know my hopes ;
I am assured, at length, they may not be ;
That truth is just as far from me as ever ;
That I have thrown my life away ; that sorrow
On that account is vain, and further effort
To mend and patch what's marr'd beyond repairing
As useless : and all this was taught to me
By the convincing, good old-fashion'd method
Of force—by sheer compulsion. Is that plain ?

Fest. Dear Aureole ! can it be my fears were just !
God wills not . . .

Par. Now, 't is this I most admire—
The constant talk men of your stamp keep up
Of God's will, as they style it ; one would swear

Man had but merely to uplift his eye,
To see the will in question character'd
On the heaven's vault. 'Tis hardly wise to moot
Such topics : doubts are many and faith is weak.
I know as much of any will of His
As knows some dumb and tortur'd brute of what
His stern lord wills from the bewildering blows
That plague him every way, and there, of course,
Where least he suffers, longest he will stay :
My case ; and for such reasons I plod on—
Subdued, but not convinced. I know as little
Why I deserve to fail, as why I hoped
Better things in my youth. I simply know
I am no master here, but train'd and beaten
Into the path I tread ; and here I stay,
Until some further intimation reach me,
Like an obedient drudge : and though I like
The best to view the whole thing as a task
Imposed—which, dull or pleasant, must be done—
Yet, I deny not, there is made provision
Of joys which tastes less jaded might affect ;
Nay, some which please me too, for all my pride—

Pleasures that once were pains : the iron ring
Festering about a slave's neck grows at length
Into the flesh it eats. I hate no longer
A host of petty, vile delights, undream'd of
Or spurn'd, before ; such now supply the place
Of my dead aims : as in the autumn woods
Where tall trees flourish'd—from their very roots
Springs up a fungous brood, sickly and pale,
Chill mushrooms, colour'd like a corpse's cheek . . .

Fest. If I interpret well your words, I own
It troubles me but little that your aims,
Vast in their dawning, and most likely grown
Extravagantly since, have proved abortive :
Perchance I am glad ; you have the greater praise,
Because they are too glorious to be gain'd—
You have not blindly clung to them and died
With them—you have not sullenly refused
To rise, because an angel worsted you
In wrestling, though the world has not your peer ;
And though too harsh and sudden is the change
To yield you pleasure, as yet—still, you pursue
The ungracious path as though 't were rosy-strewn.

'Tis well : and your reward, sooner or later,
Will come from Him whom none e'er served in vain.

Par. Ah ! very fine : for my part I conceive
The very pausing from all further toil,
Which you find heinous, would be as a seal
To the sincerity of all my deeds :
To be consistent I should die at once ;
I calculated on no after-life ;
Nay, was assured no such could be for me,
Yet—(how crept in, how foster'd, I know not)—
Here am I with as passionate regret
For youth, and health, and love so vainly lavish'd,
As if their preservation had been first
And foremost in my thoughts ; and this strange fact
Humbled me wondrously, and had due force
In rendering me the less averse to follow
A certain counsel, a mysterious warning—
You will not understand—but 't was a man
Perishing in my sight, who summon'd me,
As I would shun the ghastly fate I saw,
To serve my race at once ; to wait no longer
That God should interfere in my behalf—

Nor trust to time ; but to distrust myself,
And give my gains, imperfect as they were,
To men. I have not leisure to explain
How since, a singular series of events
Has raised me to the station you behold,
Wherein I seem to turn to most account
The sad wreck of the past, and to receive
Some feeble glimmering token that God views
And may approve my penance : therefore here
You find me—doing good as best I may;
And if folks wonder much and profit little
'Tis not my fault ; only I shall rejoice
When my part in the farce is shuffled through,
And the curtain falls ; I must hold out 'till then.

Fest. 'Till when, dear Aureole ?

Par. 'Till I'm fairly thrust
From my proud eminence. Fortune is fickle
And even professors fall : should that arrive,
I see no sin in ceding to my bent,
Whatever that may be—but not till then.
You little fancy what rude shocks apprise us
We sin : God's intimations rather fail

In clearness than in energy : 'twere well
Did they but indicate the course to take
Like that to be forsaken. I would fain
Be spared a further sample . . . Here I am
And here I stay, be sure, till forced to flit.

Fest. Be you but firm on that head ; long ere then
All I expect will come to pass, I trust :
The cloud that wraps you will have disappear'd.
At present I see small chance of such event :
They praise you here as one whose lore already
Divulged eclipses all the past can show,
But whose achievements, marvellous as they be,
Are faint anticipations of a light
Which shall hereafter be reveal'd. When they
Dismiss their teacher, I shall be content
That he depart.

Par. This favour at their hands
I look for earlier than your view of things
Would warrant. Of the crowd you saw to-day
Remove the herd whom sheer amazement brings,
The novelty, nought else ; and next, the tribe
Whose innate blockish dullness just perceives

That unless miracles (as seem my works)
Be wrought in their behalf, they are not like
To puzzle the devil ; and a numerous set
Who bitterly hate establish'd schools, and help
A teacher that oppugns them, 'till he once
Have planted his own doctrine, when the teacher
May reckon on their rancour in his turn ;
With a good sprinkling of sagacious knaves
Whose cunning runs not counter to the vogue,
But seeks, by flattery and crafty nursing,
To force my system to a premature
Short-lived developement . . . Why swell the list ?
Each has his end to serve, and his best way
Of pushing it : remove all these, remains
A scantling—a poor dozen at the best—
Worthy to look for sympathy and service,
And likely to draw profit from my pains.

Fest. 'Tis no encouraging picture : still these few
Redeem their fellows. Once the germ implanted
The rest will fail not to succeed.

Par.

God grant it !

I would make some amends : the hate between us

Is on one side. Should it prove otherwise,
The luckless rogues have this excuse to urge,
That much is in my method and my manner,
My uncouth habits, my impatient spirit,
Which hinders of its influence and reception
My doctrine : much to say, small skill to speak . . .
It is, I fancy, some slight proof my old
Devotion suffer'd not a looking-off,
Though for an instant, seeing that then alone
When I renounced it and resolved to reap
Some present fruit—to teach mankind the truth
So dearly purchased—*then* I first discover'd
Such teaching was an art requiring cares
And qualities peculiar to itself:
That to possess was one thing—to display
Another. I had never dream'd of this :
Had but renown been present in my thoughts,
Or popular praise, I had soon found it out.
One grows but little apt to learn these things.

Fest. If it be so, which nowise I believe,
There needs no waiting fuller dispensation
To leave a labour to so little use :
Why not throw up the irksome charge at once ?

Par. A task, a task ! . . .

But wherefore hide the whole
Extent of degradation, once engaged
In the confessing vein ? In spite of all
My fine talk of obedience, and repugnance,
Docility, and what not, 'tis yet to learn
If when the task shall really be perform'd,
My inclinations free to choose once more,
I shall do aught but slightly modify
Its nature in the next career they try.
In plain words, I am spoil'd : my life still tends
As first it tended. I am broken and train'd
To my old habits ; they are part of me :
I know, and none so well, my darling ends
Are proved impossible : no less, no less,
Even now what humours me, fond fool, as when
Their faint ghosts sit with me, and flatter me,
And send me back content to my dull round ?
How can I change this soul ? this apparatus
Constructed solely for their purposes ?
So well adapted to their wants and uses—
To search, discover, and dissect, and prove :
This intricate machine, whose most minute

And meanest motions have their charms to me
Though to none else—an aptitude I see—
An object I perceive—a use, a meaning,
A property, a fitness, I explain,
And I alone . . . How can I change my soul ?
And this wrong'd body, worthless save when task'd
Under that soul's dominion—used to care
For its bright master's cares, and to subdue
Its proper cravings—not to ail, nor pine,
So he but prosper—whither drag this poor,
Tried, patient body ? God ! how I essay'd,
To live like that mad poet, for a while !
To love alone ! and how I felt too warp'd
And twisted and deform'd ! What should I do,
Released from this sad drudgery, but return
Faint as I am and halting, blind and sore,
To my old life—and die as I begun !
I cannot feed on beauty, for the sake
Of beauty only ; nor can drink in balm
From lovely objects for their loveliness ;
My nature cannot lose her first impress ;
I still must hoard, and heap, and class all truths

With one ulterior purpose—one intent.
Would God translate me to his throne, believe
That I should only listen to his words
To further my own aims ! Full well I know
Beauty is prodigally strewn around,
And I were happy could I trample under
This mad and thriveless longing, and content me
With beauty for itself alone : alas !
I have address'd a frock of heavy mail,
Yet may not join the troop of sacred knights ;
And now the forest-creatures fly from me,
The grass-banks cool, the sunbeams warm no more !
Best follow, dreaming that ere night arrive
I shall o'ertake the company, and ride
Glittering as they !

Fest. I think I apprehend
What you would say : if you, in truth, design
To enter on such life again, seek not
To hide that much of all this consciousness
Of failure is assumed.

Par. My friend, my friend,
I tell—you listen ; I explain—perhaps

You understand : there our communion ends.
Have you learnt nothing from to-day's discourse ?
When we would thoroughly know the sick man's state
We feel awhile the fluttering pulse, press soft
The hot brow, look upon the languid eye,
And thence divine the rest. Must I lay bare
My heart, hideous and beating, or tear up
My vitals for your gaze, ere you will deem
Enough made known ? You ! who are you, forsooth ?
That is the crowning operation claim'd
By the arch-demonstrator—heaven the hall,
And earth the audience. Let Aprile and you
Secure good places—'t will be worth the while.

Fest. Are you mad, Aureole ? What can I have said
To call for this ? I judged from your own words.

Par. Oh, doubtless ! A sick wretch describes the ape
That mocks him from the bed-foot, and all gravely
You thither turn at once : or he recounts
The perilous journey he has late perform'd
And you are puzzled much how that could be !
You find me here, half stupid and half mad :
It makes no part of my delight to search

Into these things, much less to undergo
Another's scrutiny ; but so it chances
That I am led to trust my state to you
As calmly, as sincerely, as I may ;
And the event is, you combine, contrast,
And ponder on my foolish words, as though
They thoroughly convey'd all hidden *here*—
Here, loathsome with despair, and hate, and rage !
Is there no fear, no shrinking, or no shame ?
Will you guess nothing ? will you spare me nothing ?
Must I go deeper ? Aye or no ?

Fest.

Dear friend . . .

Par. True : I am brutal—'t is a part of it ;
A plague-fit : you are not a lazar-haunter,
How should you know ? Well then, you think it strange
I should profess to have fail'd utterly,
And yet propose an ultimate return
To courses void of hope : and this, because
You know not what temptation is, nor how
'T is like to ply me in the sickliest part.
You are to understand, that we who make
Sport for the gods, are hunted to the end :

There is not one sharp volley shot at us,
Which 'scaped with life, though hurt, we slacken pace
And gather by the way-side herbs and roots
To staunch our wounds, secure from further harm . . .
We are assail'd to life's extremest verge.
It will be well indeed if I return,
A harmless busy fool, to my old ways !
I would forget hints of another fate
Significant enough, which silent hours
Have lately scared me with.

Fest. Another! and what?

Par. After all, Festus, you say well : I am
A man yet—I need never humble me ;
I would have been—something, I know not what ;
But though I cannot soar, I do not crawl :
There are worse portions than this one of mine ;
You say well . . .

Fest. Ah! . . .

Par. And deeper degradation:
If the mean stimulants of vulgar praise,
And vanity, should become the chosen food
Of a sunk mind ; should stifle even the wish

To find its early aspirations true ;
Should teach it to breathe falsehood like life-breath—
An atmosphere of craft, and trick, and lies—
Should make it proud to emulate or surpass
Base natures in the practices which woke
Its most indignant loathing once . . . No, no :
Utter damnation is reserved for Hell !
I *had* immortal feelings—such shall never
Be wholly quench'd—no, no.

My friend, you wear
A melancholy face, and certain 'tis,
There's little cheer in all this dismal work ;
But 'twas not my desire to set abroad
Such memories and forebodings. I foresaw
Where they would drive ; 'twere better to discuss
News of Lucerne or Zurich ; or to tell
Of Egypt's flaring sky, or Spain's cork-groves.

Fest. I have thought : trust me, this mood will pass away.
I know you, and the lofty spirit you bear,
And easily ravel out a clue to all :
These are the trials meet for such as you,
Nor must you hope exemption : to be mortal

Is to be plied with trials manifold.

Look round ! the obstacles which kept the rest

From your ambition have been spurn'd by you :

Their fears, their doubts, the chains that bind them best,

Were flax before your resolute soul, which nought

Avails to awe, save these delusions, bred

From its own strength, its selfsame strength, disguised—

Mocking itself. Be brave, dear Aureole ! since

The rabbit has his shade to frighten him,

The fawn a rustling bough, mortals their cares,

And higher natures yet would slight and laugh

At these entangling fantasies, as you

At trammels of a weaker mind ; but judge

Your mind's dimension by the shade it casts !

I know you.

Par. And I know you, dearest Festus!

And how you love unworthily ; and how

All admiration renders blind.

Fest. You hold

That admiration blinds ?

Par. Aye, and alas!

Fest. Nought blinds you less than admiration :

Whether it be that all love renders wise
In its degree ; from love which blends with love—
Heart answering heart—to that which spends itself
In silent mad idolatry of some
Pre-eminent mortal—some great soul of souls—
Which ne'er will know how well it is adored :
I say, such love is never blind ; but rather
Alive to every the minutest spot
That mars its object, and which hate (supposed
So vigilant and searching) dreams not of :
Love broods on such : what then ? In the first case
Is there no sweet strife to forget, to change,
To overflush those blemishes with all
The glow of goodness they cannot disturb ?
To make those very defects an endless source
Of new affection grown from hopes and fears ?
And in the last, is there no gallant stand
Made even for much proved weak ? no shrinking-back
Lest (since all love assimilates the soul
To what it loves) it should at length become
Almost a rival of its idol ? Trust me,
If there be fiends who seek to work our hurt,

To ruin and drag down earth's mightiest spirits,
Even at God's foot, 't will be from such as love—
Their zeal will gather most to serve their cause;
And least from those who hate, who most essay
By contumely and scorn to blot the light
Which will have entrance even to *their* hearts;
For thence will our defender tear the veil
And show within the heart, as in a shrine,
The giant image of Perfection, grown
In their despite, whose calumnies were spawn'd
In the untroubled presence of its eyes!
True admiration blinds not; nor am I
So blind: I know your unexampled sins,
But I know too what sort of soul is prone
To errors of that stamp—sins like to spring
From one alone whose life has pass'd the bounds
Prescribed to life. Compound *that* fault with God!
I speak of men; to common men like me
The weakness you confess endears you more—
Like the far traces of decay in suns:
I bid you have good cheer!

Par.

Præclare! Optime!

Think of a quiet mountain-cloister'd priest
Instructing Paracelsus! yet, 't is so :
And that his flittering words should soothe me better
Than fulsome tributes : not that that is strange :
Come, I will show you where my merit lies.
I ne'er supposed that since *I* fail'd no other
Needs hope success : I act as though each one
Who hears me may aspire : now mark me well :
'T is in the advance of individual minds
That the slow crowd should ground their expectation
Eventually to follow—as the sea
Waits ages in its bed, 'till some one wave
Of all the multitudinous mass extends
The empire of the whole, some feet perhaps,
Over the strip of sand which could confine
Its fellows so long time : thenceforth the rest,
Even to the meanest, hurry in at once,
And so much is clear gain'd. I shall be glad
If all my labours, failing of aught else,
Suffice to make such inroad—to procure
A wider range for thought : nay, they *do* this ;
For whatsoe'er my notions of true knowledge

And a legitimate success may be,
I am not blind to my undoubted rank
When class'd with others. I precede my age :
And whoso wills, is very free to make
That use of me which I disdain'd to make
Of my forerunners—(vanity, perchance ;
But had I deem'd their learning wonder-worth,
I had been other than I am)—to mount
Those labours as a platform, whence their own
May have a prosperous outset : but, alas !
My followers—they are noisy as you heard,
But for intelligence—the best of them
So clumsily wield the weapons I supply
And they extol, that I begin to doubt
Whether their own rude clubs and pebble-stones
Would not do better service than my arms
Thus vilely sway'd—if error will not fall
Sooner before their awkward batterings
Than my more subtle warfare !

Fest.

In that case,

I would supply that art, and would withhold
The arms until their mystery was made known.

Par. Content you, 'tis my wish ; I have recourse
To the simplest training. Day by day I seek
To wake the mood, the spirit which alone
Can make those arms of any use to them.
Of course they are for swaggering forth at once
With Hercules' club, Achilles' shield, Ulysses'
Bow—a choice sight to scare the crows away !

Fest. Pity you choose not, then, some other method
Of coming at your point. The marvellous art
At length establish'd in the world bids fair
To remedy all hindrances like these :
Trust to Frobenius' press the precious lore
Obscured by uncouth manner, or unfit
For raw beginners—let his types secure
A deathless monument to after-times ;
Meanwhile enjoy and confidently wait
The ultimate effect : sooner or later
You shall be all-reveal'd.

Par. An ancient question
In a new form ; no more. Thus : I possess
Two sorts of knowledge—one, vast, shadowy, hints
Of the unbounded aim I once pursued—

The other, many secrets, made my own
While bent on nobler prize, and not a few
First principles which may conduct to much :
These last I offer to my followers here.
Now bid me chronicle the first of these,
My ancient study, and in effect you bid me
Revert to the wild course I have abjured.
And, for the principles, they are so simple
(Being chiefly of the overturning sort),
That one time is as proper to propound them
As any other—to-morrow at my class,
Or half a century hence embalm'd in print ;
For if mankind intend to learn at all,
They must begin by giving faith to them,
And acting on them ; and I do not see
But that my lectures serve indifferent well :
No doubt these dogmas fall not to the earth,
For all their novelty and rugged setting.
I think my class will not forget the day
I let them know the gods of Israel,
Aëtius, Oribasius, Galen, Rhasis,

And Avicenna, and Averröes,
Were blocks !

Fest. And that reminds me, they said something
About your waywardness : you burn'd their books,
It seems, instead of answering those sages . . .

Par. And who said that ?

Fest. Some I met yesternight
With Œcolampadius. As you know, the purpose
Of this short stay at Basil was to learn
His pleasure touching certain missives sent
For our Zuinglius and himself. 'T was he
Apprized me that the famous teacher here
Was my old friend.

Par. Ah, I forgot : you went . . .

Fest. From Zurich with advices for the ear
Of Luther, now at Wittemburg—(you know,
I make no doubt, the differences of late
With Carolostadius)—and returning sought
Basil and Œcolampadius.

Par. Here's a case now
Will teach you why I answer not, but burn

The books you mention : pray, does Luther dream
His arguments convince by their own force
The crowds that own his doctrine ? No, indeed :
His plain denial of establish'd points
Ages had sanctified and none supposed
Could be oppugn'd while earth was under him
And heaven above—which chance, or change, or time
Affected not—did more than the array
Of argument which follow'd. Boldly deny !
There is much breath-stopping, hair-stiffening
Awhile, amazed glances, mute awaiting
The thunderbolt which does not come—and next
Reproachful wonder and inquiry ; those
Who else had never stirr'd are able now
To find the rest out for themselves—perhaps
To outstrip him who set the whole at work,
As never will my wise class its instructor . . .
And you saw Luther ?

Fest. 'T is a wondrous soul !

Par. True : the so-heavy chain which gall'd mankind
Is shatter'd, and the noblest of us all
Must bow to the deliverer—nay, the worker

Of our own projects—we who long before
Had burst its trammels, but forgot the crowd
We would have taught still groan'd beneath the load :
This he has done and nobly. Speed that may !
Whatever be my chance or my despair
What benefits mankind must glad me too :
And men seem made, though not as I believed,
For something better than the times can show :
Witness these gangs of peasants your new lights
From Suabia have possess'd, whom Munzer leads,
And whom the duke, the landgrave, and the elector
Will calm in blood ! Well, well—'t is not my world.

Fest. Hark !

Par. 'T is the melancholy wind astir
Within the trees ; the embers too are grey,
Morn must be near.

Fest. Best ope the casement : see
The night, late strewn with clouds and flying stars,
Is blank and motionless : how peaceful sleep
The tree-tops all together ! like an asp
The wind slips whispering from bough to bough.

Par. Ay ; you would gaze on a wind-shaken tree
By the hour, nor count time lost.

Fest. So you shall gaze :
Those happy times will come again . . .

Par. Gone ! gone !
Those pleasant times ! Does not the moaning wind
Seem to bewail that we have gain'd such gains
And barter'd sleep for them ?

Fest. It is our trust
That there is yet another world to mend
All error and mischance. . . .

Par. Another world !
And why this world, this common world to be
A make-shift, a mere foil, how fair soever,
To some fine life to-come ? Man must be fed
With angel's food, forsooth ; and some few traces
Of a diviner nature which look out
Through his corporeal baseness warrant him
In a supreme contempt for all provision
For his inferior tastes—some straggling marks
Which constitute his essence, just as truly
As here and there a gem would constitute

The rock, their barren bed, a diamond.
But were it so—were man all mind—the station
He gains is little enviable. From God
Down to the lowest spirit ministrant
Intelligence exists which casts *our* mind
Into immeasurable shade. No, no :
Love, hope, fear, faith—these make humanity ;
These are its sign, and note, and character ;
And these I have lost ! gone ; shut from me for ever,
Like a dead friend, safe from unkindness more !
See morn at length. The heavy darkness seems
Diluted ; grey and clear without the stars ;
The shrubs bestir and rouse themselves, as though
Some snake that weigh'd them down all night let go
His hold ; and from the east, fuller and fuller
Day, like a mighty river, flowing in ;
But clouded, wintry, desolate, and cold :
Yet see how that broad, prickly, star-shaped plant,
Half down in the crevice, spreads its woolly leaves,
All thick and glistening with diamond dew.
And you depart for Einsiedeln this day :
And we have spent all night in talk like this !

If you would have me better for your love

Revert no more to these sad themes.

Fest.

One favour,

And I have done. I leave you, deeply moved ;

Unwilling to have fared so well, the while

My friend has changed so sorely : if this mood

Shall pass away—if light once more arise

Where all is darkness now—if you see fit

To hope, and trust again, and strive again ;

You will remember—not our love alone—

But that my faith in God's desire that man

Should trust on his support, as I must think

You trusted, is obscured and dim through you ;

For you are thus, and this is no reward :

Will you not call me to your side, dear Aureole ?

IV.—PARACELSUS ASPIRES.

SCENE.—*A House at Colmar, in Alsatia.* 1528.

PARACELSUS, FESTUS.

*Par. (To John Oporinus, his secretary.) Sic itur ad
astra ! Dear Von Visenburg*

Is scandalized, and poor Torinus paralyzed,
And every honest soul that Basil holds
Aghast ; and yet we live, as one may say,
Just as though Liechtenfels had never set
So true a value on his sorry carcass,
And learned Pütter had not frown'd us dumb.
We live ; and shall as surely start to-morrow
For Nuremburg as we drink speedy scathe
To Basil in this mantling wine, suffused
A delicate blush—no fainter tinge is born
I' th' shut heart of a bud : pledge me, good John—
“ Basil ; a hot plague ravage it, and Pütter

“ Oppose the plague ! ” Even so ? Do you too share
Their panic—the reptiles ? Ha, ha ; faint through *them*,
Desist for *them* ! They manage matters so
At Basil, ’t is like : but others may find means
To bring the stoutest braggart of the tribe
Once more to crouch in silence—means to breed
A stupid wonder in each fool again,
Now big with admiration at the skill
Which stript a vain pretender of his plumes ;
And, that done, means to brand each slavish brow
So deeply-sure, so ineffaceably,
That thenceforth flattery shall not pucker it
So well but there the hideous stamp shall stay,
To teach the man they fawn on who they are
Whom I curse soul and limb. And now dispatch,
Dispatch, my trusty John ; and what remains
To do, whate’er arrangements for our trip
Are yet to be completed, see you hasten
This night ; we ’ll weather the storm at least : to-morrow
For Nuremburg ! Now leave us ; this grave clerk
Has divers weighty matters for my ear, (*Oporinus goes out*)
And spare my lungs. At last, my gallant Festus,

I have got rid of this arch-knave that dogs me
As a gaunt crow a gasping sheep ; and now
May give a loose to my delight. How kind,
How very kind, my first, best, only friend !
Why this looks like fidelity. Embrace me :
Not a hair silver'd yet ! Right : you shall live
Till I am worth your love ; you shall be proud,
And I—but time will show. Did you not wonder ?
I sent to you because our compact weigh'd
Upon my conscience—(you recall the night
At Basil, which the gods confound)—because
Once more I aspire ! And you are here ! All this
Is strange, and strange my message.

Fest.

I confess,

So strange that I must think your messenger
Has mingled his own fancies with the words
Purporting to be yours.

Par.

He said no more,

'T is probable, than the precious folks I leave
Have said more roughly fifty-fold. Alack,
'T is true : poor Paracelsus is exposed
At last : a most egregious quack is he ;

And those he overreach'd must spit their hate
On one who, utterly beneath contempt,
Could yet deceive their topping wits. He said
Bare truth ; and at my bidding you are here
To speed me on my enterprise, as once
Your lavish wishes sped me, my own friend ?

Fest. And now, what is your purpose, Aureole ?

Par. There is no lack of precedents in a case
Like mine, at least, if not precisely mine,
The case of men cast off by those they sought
To benefit . . .

Fest. They really cast you off ? . . .

I merely heard a vague tale of some priest,
Cured by your skill, who wrangled at the just
Reward you claim'd ; and that the magistrate
The matter was referr'd to saw no cause
To interfere, nor you to hide your full
Contempt of him ; nor he, again, to smother
His wrath, which raised so hot an opposition
That Basil soon became no place for you.

Par. The affair of Liechtenfels ? the shallowest pretext,
The last and silliest outrage—mere pretence.

I knew it, I foretold it from the first,
How soon the stupid wonder you mistook
For genuine loyalty—a cheering promise
Of better things to come—would pall and pass ;
And every word comes true. Saul is among
The prophets ! Just so long as I was pleased
To play off all the marvels of my art—
Fantastic gambols leading to no end—
I had huge praise, and doubtless might have grown
Grey in the exposition of such antics,
Had my stock lasted long enough ; but such
Was not my purpose : one can ne'er keep down
Our foolish nature's weakness . . . There they flock'd,
Poor devils, jostling, swearing, and perspiring,
Till the walls rang again ; and all for me !
I had a kindness for them, which was right ;
But then I stopp'd not till I tack'd to that
A trust in them and a respect—a sort
Of sympathy for them : I, in short, began
To teach them, not amaze them ; to impart
The spirit which should instigate the search
Of truth. Forthwith a mighty squadron straight

Filed off—"the sifted chaff of the sack," I said,
Redoubling my endeavours to secure
The rest; when lo! one man had tarried so long
Only to ascertain if I supported
This tenet or the other; another loved
To hear impartially before he judged,
And now was satisfied; one had all along
Spied error where his neighbours marvell'd most:
This doctor set a school up to revive
The good old ways which could content our sires,
Though not their squeamish sons; the other worthy
Discover'd divers verses of St. John,
Which read successively refresh'd the soul,
But mutter'd backwards cured the gout, the stone,
The cholic, and what not—*quid multa?* The end
Was a clear class-room, and a quiet leer
From grave folk, and a sour reproachful look
From those in chief, who, cap in hand, install'd
The new professor scarce a year before;
And a vast flourish about patient merit
Obscured awhile by flashy tricks, but sure
Sooner or later to emerge in splendour—

Of which the example was some luckless wight
Whom my arrival had discomfited,
But now, it seems, the general voice recall'd
To fill my chair, and so efface the stain
Basil had long incur'd. I sought no better—
Nought but a quiet dismissal from my post ;
And from my heart I wish'd them better suited,
And better served. Good night to Basil, then !
But fast as I proposed to rid the tribe
Of my obnoxious self, I could not spare them
The pleasure of a parting kick.

Fest.

You smile :

Despise them as they merit !

Par.

If I smile,

'Tis with as very contempt as ever turn'd
Flesh into stone : this courteous recompense,
This grateful . . . Festus, were your nature fit
To be defiled, your eyes the eyes to ache
At festering blotches, eating poisoning blains,
The ulcerous barky scurf of leprosy
Which finds a man and leaves a hideous thing
That cannot but be mended by hell fire,

I would lay bare the heart of man to you,
Which God cursed long ago—which devils have made
Their pet nest and their never-tiring home.

O, sages have found out that man is born
For various ends—to love, to know. Has ever
One stumbled in his search on any signs
Of a nature in him form'd to *hate*? To *hate*?
If that be man's true object which evokes
His powers in fullest strength, be sure 'tis hate:
Yet men have doubted if the best and bravest
Of spirits can nourish him with hate alone.
I had not the monopoly of fools,
It seems, at Basil.

Fest. But your plans, your plans:

I have yet to learn your purpose, Aureole.

Par. Whether to sink beneath such ponderous shame—
To shrink in like a crush'd snail—to endure
In silence and desist from further toil,
And so subside into a monument
Of one their censure blasted; or to bow
Cheerfully as submissively—to lower
My old pretensions even as they dictate—

To drop into the rank their wit assigns me,
 And live as they prescribe, and make that use
 Of all my knowledge which their rules allow—
 Proud to be patted now and then, and careful
 To practise the fit posture for receiving
 The amplest benefit from their hoofs' appliance,
 When they shall condescend to tutor me.
 Then one may feel resentment like a flame
 Within, and deck false systems in Truth's garb,
 And tangle and entwine mankind with error;
 And give them darkness for a dower, and falsehood
 For a possession, ages : or one may mope
 Into a shade for thinking ; or may drowse
 Into a dreamless sleep, and so die off :
 But I—now Festus shall divine—but I
 Am merely setting out once more, embracing
 My earliest aims again ! What thinks he now ?

Fest. Your aims ? *the aims ?—to know ?* and where is
 found

The trust, the sure belief . . .

Par.

Nay, not so fast ;

The aims—but not the means. You know they made me

A laughing-stock : I was a fool ; you know
The when and the how : hardly those means again ;
Not but they had their beauty—who should know
Their passing beauty if not I ? But still
They were dreams, so let them vanish : yet in beauty,
If that may be. Stay . . . (*He sings.*)

Heap cassia, sandal-buds, and stripes
Of labdanum, and aloe-balls
Smear'd with dull nard an Indian wipes
From out her hair : such balsam falls
From tall trees where tired winds are fain,
Spent with the vast and howling main,
To treasure half their island-gain ;
And strew faint sweetness from some old
Egyptian's fine worm-eaten shroud,
Which breaks to dust when once unroll'd ;
Or shredded perfume, like a cloud
From closet long to quiet vow'd,
With moth'd and dropping arras hung,
Mouldering her lute and books among,
As when a queen, long dead, was young.

Mine, every word ; and on such pile shall die
My lovely fancies with fair perish'd things,
Themselves fair and forgotten ; yes, forgotten,
Or why abjure them ? So I made this rhyme
That fitting dignity might be preserved :
No little proud was I ; though the list of drugs
Smacks of my old vocation, and the verse
Halts like the best of Luther's psalms . . .

Fest.

But, Aureole,

Talk not thus wildly and madly. I am here—
Did you know all ! But I have travell'd far
To learn your wishes. Be yourself again ;
For in this mood I recognize you less
Than in the horrible despondency
I witness'd last. You may account this joy ;
But rather let me gaze on your despair
Than hear your incoherent words, and see
That flush'd cheek and intensely-sparkling eye.

Par. Why, man, I was light-hearted in my prime,
I am light-hearted now ; what would you have ?
'T is the very augury of success I want !
Why should I not be joyous even as then ?

Fest. Joyous ! and how ? and what remains for joy ?
You have declared the ends (which I am sick
Of naming) are impracticable.

Par.

Aye,

Pursued as I pursued them—the arch-fool !
Listen : my plan will please you not, 't is like ;
But you are little versed in the world's ways . . .
This is my plan—(first drinking its good luck)—
I will accept *all* helps ; all I despised
So rashly at the outset, equally
With early impulses, which lately seem'd
The mere persuasion of fantastic dreams ;
All helps—no one sort shall exclude the rest :
I seek to KNOW and to ENJOY. Well then—
For all my cause should seem the cause of God
Once more, as first I dream'd, it shall not balk me
Of the meanest, earthliest, sensualest delight
That may be realized ; for joy is gain,
And gain is gain, however small : nor should,
On the other hand, those honey'd pleasures follow
As though I had not spurn'd them hitherto,
Shall they o'ercloud my spirit's rapt communion

With the tumultuous past, the teeming future,
Glorious with visions of a full success . . .

Fest. Success !

Par. And wherefore not ? Why not prefer
The grand results obtain'd in my best state
Of being to those derived from seasons dark
As the thoughts they bred ? When I was best—my youth
Unwasted—seem'd success not surest too ?
Is it not darkness' nature to obscure ?
I am a wanderer : I remember well
One journey, how I fear'd the track was miss'd—
So long the city I desired to reach
Lay hid, when suddenly its spires afar
Flash'd through the circling clouds ; you may conceive
My transport : soon the vapours closed again,
But I had seen the city, and one such glance
No darkness could obscure : nor shall sad days
Destroy the vivid memories of the past :
I will fight the battle out !—a little spent
Perhaps—but still an able combatant.
You look at my grey hair and furrow'd brow ;
But I can turn even weakness to account :

Of many tricks I know, 'tis not the least
To push the ruins of my frame, whereon
The fire of vigour trembles scarce alive,
Into a heap, and send the flame aloft !
What should I do with age ? so sickness lends
An aid ; it being, I fear, the source of all
We boast of : mind is nothing but disease,
And natural health is ignorance.

Fest.

There is

But one good symptom in this notable scheme :
I fear'd your sudden project had in view
To wreak immediate vengeance on your foes ;
'T is not so : I am glad.

Par.

And if I please

To spit on them, to trample them, what then ?
'T is sorry warfare truly, but the fools
Provoke it : I ne'er sought to domineer ;
The mere asserting my supremacy
Has little mortified their self-conceit ;
I took my natural station and no more :
But if they *will* provoke me—will not suffer
Forbearance on my part—if I can have

No quality in the shade, but must put forth
Power for power ; my strength against theirs—
Must teach them their own game with their own arms—
Why be it so, and let them take their chance !
I am above them like a God—there's no
Hiding the fact—and, had I been but wise,
Had ne'er concern'd myself with scruples, nor
Communicated aught to such a race ;
But been content to own myself a man,
And in my elevation man's would be . . .
But live and learn, though life's so short ! as 't is—
Though no more than the wreck of my past self—
I fear, dear Pütter, that your lecture-room
Must wait awhile for its best ornament,
The penitent empiric, who set up
For somebody, but soon was taught his place—
Now, but too happy to be let confess
His error, snuff the candles, and illustrate
Your tenets' soundness in his person. Wait,
Good Pütter !

Fest. He who sneers thus, is a God !

Par. Ay, ay, laugh at me ! I am very glad

You are not gull'd by all this swaggering ; *you*
Can see the root of the matter !—how I strive
To put a good face on the overthrow
I have experienced, and to hide and bury
My degradation in its length and breadth ;
And how the motives I would make you think
Just mingle as is due with nobler passions,
The cursed lusts I modestly allow
May influence me—as I am mortal still—
Are goading me, and fast supplanting all
My youth's desires : *you* are no stupid dupe ;
You find me out. Yes, I had sent for you
To palm these childish lies upon you, Festus !
Laugh—*you* shall laugh at me !

Fest.

Dear Aureole, then

The past is nothing ? Is our intercourse
Yet to begin ? Have I to swear I mean
No flattery in this or that ? Whatever
You be, this is no degradation—these
Unworthy thoughts no inmates of your mind ;
Or wherefore this disorder ? You are troubled
As much by the intrusion of base views,

Familiar to your adversaries, as they
Would be should your high qualities alight
Amid their murky souls : and even so
A stray wolf which the winter forces down
From the bleak hills suffices to affright
A village in the vales—while foresters
Sleep sound though all night long the famish'd troops
Snuff round and scratch against their crazy huts :
These evil things are monsters and will flee.

Par. May you be happy, Festus, my own friend !

Fest. Nay, further ; the delights you fain would think
Have superseded nobler aims, the harmless
And ordinary stimulants, will never
Content you . . .

Par. Oh, forbear ! I once despised . . .
But that soon passes : we are high at first
In our demands, nor will abate a jot
Of their strict value ; but time passes o'er
And humbler spirits accept what we refuse ;
In short, when some such comfort is doled out
As these delights—we cannot long retain
The bitter contempt which urges us at first

To hurl it back—but hug it to our breast
And thankfully retire. This life of mine
Must be lived out and a grave thoroughly earn'd :
I am just fit for that and nought beside.
I told you once, I cannot now Enjoy,
Unless I deem my knowledge gains thereby ;
Nor can I Know, without warm tears revealing
The need of linking some delight to knowledge :
So on I drive—enjoying all I can
And knowing all I can. I speak, of course,
Confusedly ; *this* will better explain—feel here !
Quick beating, is it not ? a fire which must
Be work'd off someway, this as well as any :
So Festus sees me fairly launch'd ; his calm
Compassionate look might have disturb'd me once,
But now, far from rejecting, I invite it.
I can lament with him, and lay myself
Open before him, and receive his pity,
And hope, if he command hope ; and believe
What he would have me—satiating myself
With his enduring love : and he shall leave me
To give place to some credulous disciple

Who holds that God is wise, but Paracelsus
Has his peculiar merits. I suck in
His homage, chuckle o'er his admiration,
And then dismiss him in his turn : night comes,
And I shall give myself to painful study ;
And patient searching after hidden lore
Shall wring some bright truth from its prison ; my frame
Shall tremble, and my thin lips swell, my hair
Tingle, and all for triumph ! and the morn
Shall break on my pent room, and dwindling lamp,
And scatter'd papers, and unfinish'd scrawls ;
And with a failing heart and throbbing brow
I shall review my captur'd truth, and trace
Its end and consequence, its further bearings,
Its true affinities, the views it opens,
The length it goes in perfecting my scheme,
And view it sternly circumscribed—cast down
From the high place my fond hopes yielded it,
Proved worthless—which in getting yet had cost
Another wrench to this fast-falling frame ;
And I shall quaff the cup that chases sorrow
And lapse back into youth again, and take

My fluttering pulse for evidence that God
Means good to me, and see my hopes come true,
And flee away from this remorseless care
Which clogs a spirit born to soar so free,
And my dim chamber shall become a tent,
And Festus shall sit by me, and sweet Michal
Shall make as though my ardent words should find
No echo in a maiden's quiet soul—
But her pure bosom shall heave, her eyes fill fast
With tears, her lips shall tremble all the while!
Ha, ha !

Fest. It seems then you expect to reap
No unreal joy from this your present course ;
That you expect . . .

Par. To die ! I owe that much
To what I *was* at least. I should be sad
To live contented after such a fall—
To thrive and fatten after such reverse !
The whole plan is a makeshift, but will last
My time . . .

Fest. And you have never mused and said,
“ I had a noble purpose, and the strength

“ To compass it ; but I have stopp’d half-way,
“ And have bestow’d the first fruits of my toil
“ On objects little worthy to receive them :
“ Why linger round them still ? why clench my fault ?
“ Why seek for consolation in defeat—
“ In vain endeavours to derive a beauty
“ From ugliness ? why seek to make the most
“ Of what no power can change, in place of striving
“ With mighty effort to redeem the past,
“ To gather up the treasures I cast down,
“ And hold a steadfast course ’till I arrive
“ At their fit destination—and my own.”
You have never ponder’d thus ?

Par. (sings).

Over the sea our galleys went,
Cleaving prows in order brave,
With speeding wind and a bounding wave—
A gallant armament :
Each bark built out of a forest-tree,
Left leafy and rough as first it grew,
And nail’d all over the gaping sides,
Within and without, with black-bull hides,

Seeth'd in fat and suppl'd in flame ;
So each good ship was rude to see,
Rude and bare to outward view,

But each upbore a stately tent :
Cedar-pales in scented row
Kept out the flakes of dancing brine :
An awning droop'd the mast below,
That neither noon-tide nor star-shine,
Nor moonlight cold which maketh mad,

Might pierce the regal tenement.
When the sun dawn'd, gay and glad
We set the sail and plied the oar ;
But when the night-wind blew like breath,
For joy of one day's voyage more,
We sang together on the wide sea,
Like men at peace on a peaceful shore ;
Each sail was loosed to the wind so free,
Each helm made sure by the twilight star,
And in a sleep as calm as death,
We, the voyagers from afar,

Lay stretch'd—each weary crew
In a circle round its wondrous tent,

Whence gleam'd soft light and curl'd rich scent,
And with light and perfume, music too :
At morn we started beside the mast,
And still each ship was sailing fast !
Now one morn land appeared !—a speck
Dim trembling betwixt sea and sky—
Not so the isles our voyage must find
Should meet our longing eye ;
But the heaving sea was black behind
Many a night and many a day,
And land, though but a rock, was nigh ;
So we broke the cedar pales away,
And let the purple flap in the wind :
And a statue bright was on every deck !
We shouted, every man of us,
And steer'd right into the harbour thus,
With pomp and pœan glorious.

An hundred shapes of lucid stone !

All day we built its shrine for each—
A shrine of rock for every one—
Nor paused till in the westering sun
We sate together on the beach

To sing, because our task was done ;
When lo ! what shouts and merry songs !
What laughter all the distance stirs !
A loaded raft, and happy throngs
Of gentle islanders !
“ Our isles are just at hand,” they cried ;
 “ Like cloudlets faint in even sleeping,
“ Our temple-gates are open’d wide,
 “ Our olive-groves thick shade are keeping
“ For these majestic forms,” they cried.
Then we awoke with sudden start
From our deep dream, and knew, too late,
How bare the rock, how desolate,
Which had received our precious freight :
 Yet we call’d out—“ Depart !
“ Our gifts, once given, must here abide :
 “ Our work is done ; we have no heart
“ To mar our work,” we cried.

Fest. In truth ?

Par. Nay, wait : all this in tracings faint
On rugged stones, strewn here and there, but piled

In order once ; then follows—mark what follows—

“ The sad rhyme of the men who proudly clung

“ To their first fault, and wither’d in their pride ! ”

Fest. Come back, then, Aureole ; as you fear God,
“ come !

This is foul sin ; come back : renounce the past,

Forswear the future ; look for joy no more,

But wait for death amid all peaceful sights,

And trust me for the event—peace, if not joy !

Return with me to Einsiedeln, dear Aureole.

Par. No way, no way : it would not turn to good.

A spotless child sleeps on the flowering moss—

’T is well for him ; and one deform’d by sin,

Envyng such slumber, may desire to put

His guilt away : shall he return at once

To boyhood’s carelessness ? Our sires knew well

(Spite of the grave discoveries of their sons)

The fitting course for such—dark cells, dim lamps,

A stone floor one may writhe on like a worm ;

No mossy pillow, blue with violets.

Fest. I see no symptom of these overbearing

And tyrannous passions. You are calmer now.

This verse-making can purge you well enough,
Without the terrible penance you describe.
You love me still : the lusts you fear will never
Outrage your friend. To Einsiedeln, once more !
Say but the word !

Par. No, no ; those lusts forbid :

They crouch, I know, cowering with half-shut eye
Beside you ; 'tis their nature. Thrust yourself
Between them and their prey ; let some fool style me
Or king or quack, it matters not, and let
Your wisdom urge them to forego their treat !
No, no ; learn better and look deeper, Festus.
If you knew how a devil sneers within me
While you are talking now of this, now that,
As though we differ'd scarcely save in trifles !

Fest. I know what you would say : all change proceeds,
Whether for good or ill ; keep that from me ;
Do not confide *those* secrets : I was born
To hope, and you . . .

Par. To trust : you know the rest.

Fest. Listen : I do believe the trust you boast
Was self-delusion at the best. So long

As God would kindly pioneer your path—
Would undertake to screen you from the world—
Procure you full exemption from their lot,
The common hopes and fears, on the mere pretext
Of your engagement in his service—yield you
A limitless license—make you God, in fact,
And turn your slave—you were content to say
Most courtly praises : what is it at last
But selfishness without example ? None
Could trace God's will so plain as you, while yours
Remain'd implied in it ; but *now* you fail,
And we who prate about that will are fools.
In short, God's service must be order'd here
As he determines fit, and not your way,
And this you cannot brook : such discontent
Is weak. Renounce all creatureship—affirm
An absolute right to have and to dispose
Your energies ; as though the rivers should say—
“ We rush to the ocean ; what have we to do
“ With feeding streamlets, lingering in the vales,
“ Sleeping in lazy pools ? ” Set up that plea,
That will be bold at least.

Par. 'T is like enough :

The serviceable spirits are those, no doubt,
The east produces. Lo, the master nods,
And they raise terraces and garden-grounds
In one night's space ; and, this done, straight relapse
Into a century's sleep, to the great honour
Of him that framed them wise and beautiful,
Till a lamp's rubbing, or some chance akin,
Release their limbs. I am of different mould.
I would have soothed my Lord, and slaved for him,
And done him service past my narrow bond,
And thus I get rewarded for my pains !
Beside, 't is vain to talk of forwarding
His glory otherwise ; *this* is the sphere
Alone of its increase, as far as we
Can be concern'd, or I am much deceived :
We are his glory ; and if *we* be glorious,
Is not the thing achieved ?

Fest. Shall one like me

Judge hearts like yours ? Though years have changed
you much,

And you have left your first love, and retain

These rhymes, and all this frothy shower of words—
My glozing self-deceit—my outward crust
Of lies, which wrap, as tetter, morpew, furfair
Wrap the sound flesh ?—so see you flatter not !
Even God flatters ! but my friend, at least,
Is true. I would depart, secure henceforth
Against all further insult, hate, and wrong
From puny foes : my one friend's scorn shall brand me—
No fear of sinking deeper.

Fest.

No, dear Aureole !

No, no ; I came to counsel faithfully :
There are old rules, made long ere we were born,
By which I judge you. I, so fallible,
So infinitely low beside your mighty
Majestic spirit—even I can see
You own some higher law. They make that out
Sin which is no sin—weakness which is strength ;
But I have only these, such as they are,
To guide me ; and I blame you where they bid,
As long as any chance remains of winning
Your troubled soul to peace ; the more that sorrow

Has fallen on me of late, and they have help'd me
So that I faint not under my distress.

But wherefore should I scruple to confess
That, spite of all, as brother judging brother,
Your fate is most inexplicable to me :
And should you perish yet without reward—
Some great reward—I have too hastily
Relied on love's effect. You may have sinn'd,
But you have loved. As a mere human matter—
As I would have God deal with fragile men
In the end—I say that you will triumph yet !

Par. You have felt sorrow, Festus ? 't is because
You love me. Sorrow, and sweet Michal yours !
Well thought on ; never let her know this last
Dull winding-up of all : these miscreants dared
Insult me—me she loved ; so grieve her not.

Fest. Your ill success can little grieve her now.

Par. Michal is dead ! pray Christ we do not craze !

Fest. Aureole, dear Aureole, look not on me thus !
Fool, fool ! this is the heart grown sorrow-proof—
I cannot bear those eyes.

Par. Nay, really dead ?

Fest. 'Tis scarce a year . . .

Par. Stone dead ! then you have laid her
Among the flowers ere this . . . Now, do you know,
I can reveal a secret which shall comfort
Even you. I have no julep, as they think,
To cheat the grave ; but a far better secret.
Know then, you did not ill to trust your love
To the cold earth : I have thought much of it—
For I believe we do not wholly die.

Fest. Aureole . . .

Par. Nay, do not laugh ; there is a reason
For what I say : I think the soul can never
Taste death. I am, just now, as you may see,
Very unfit to put so strange a thought
In an intelligible dress of words ;
But take it as my trust, she is not dead.

Fest. But not on this account alone ? you surely,
Aureole, you have believed this all along ?

Par. And Michal sleeps among the roots and dews,
While I am moved at Basil, and wondering

With Nuremberg, and hoping and despairing,
As though it matter'd how the farce plays out,
So it be quickly play'd. Away, away !
Have your will, rabble ! while we fight the prize,
Troop you in safety to the snug back-seats,
And leave a clear arena for the brave
About to perish for your sport . . . Behold !

V.—PARACELSUS ATTAINS.

SCENE.—*A cell in the Hospital of St. Sébastian, at
Salzburg. 1541.*

FESTUS, PARACELSUS.

Fest. No change ! The weary night is well nigh spent,
The lamp burns low, and through the casement-bars
The grey morn glimmers feebly—yet no change !
Another night, and still no sigh has stirr'd
That fall'n discolour'd mouth, no pang relit
Those fixed eyes, quench'd by the decaying body,
Like torch-flame choked in dust : while all beside
Was breaking, to the last they held out bright,
As a strong-hold where life intrench'd itself ;
But they are dead now—very blind and dead.
He will drowse into death without a groan !

My Aureole ; my forgotten, ruin'd Aureole !

The days are gone, are gone ! How grand thou wert :
And now not one of those who struck thee down—
Poor, glorious spirit—concerns him even to stay
And satisfy himself his little hand
Could turn God's image to a livid thing.

Another night, and yet no change ! 'Tis much
That I should sit by him, and bathe his brow,
And chafe his hands—'tis much ; but he will sure
Know me, and look on me, and speak to me
Once more—but only once ! His hollow cheek
Look'd all night long as though a creeping laugh
At his own state were just about to break
From the dying man : my brain swam and my throat
Swell'd, yet for all I could not turn away.
In truth, they told me how he seem'd at first
Resolved to live—to let no power forsake him ;
Thus striving to keep up his shatter'd strength,
Until they brought him to this stifling cell :
At once his features fell—an hour made white
The flush'd face and relax'd the quivering limb ;
Only the eye remain'd intense awhile,

As though it recognized the tomb-like place ;
And then he lay as here he lies . . .

Ay, here :

Here is earth's noblest nobly garlanded—
Her bravest champion, with his well-won meed—
Her best production—all that makes amends
For countless generations, fleeting fast
And follow'd by no trace—the all-surpassing
Creature she cites when angels would dispute
The title of her brood to rank with them . . .
Angels, this is our angel !—those bright forms
Are human, but not his : those are but men
Whom the rest press around and kneel before—
Those palaces are dwelt in by mankind ;
Other provision is for him you seek.
Behold earth's paragon ! Now, raise thee, clay !

God ! Thou art Love ! I build my faith on that :
Even as I watch beside thy tortured child,
Unconscious whose hot tears fall fast by him,
So doth thy right hand guide us through the world
Wherein we stumble. God ! what shall we say ?

How has he sinn'd—how else should he have done ?
Surely he sought thy praise—thy praise, for all
He might be wedded to the task so well
As to forget awhile its proper end . . .
Dost thou well, Lord ? Thou canst not but prefer
That I should range myself upon his side . . .
How could he stop at every step to set
Thy glory forth ? Hadst Thou but granted him
Success, thy honour would have crown'd his triumph—
A halo round a star . . . Or say he err'd :
Save him, dear God ; it will be like thee : bathe him
In light and life ! Thou art not made like us :
We should be wrath in such a case ; but Thou
Wilt smile on him. Forgive these passionate thoughts,
Which come unsought, and will not pass away.
I know thee, who hast kept my path, and made
Light for me in the darkness—tempering sorrow,
So that it reach'd me like a solemn joy ;
It were too strange that *I* should doubt thy love :
But what am *I* ? Thou madest him, and knowest
How he was fashion'd. *I* could never err
That way : the quiet place beside thy feet

Reserved for me was ever in my thoughts ;
But he—Thou shouldst have favour'd him as well !

Ah ! he wakens ! Aureole, I am here—'t is Festus !

I cast away all wishes save one wish—

Let him but know me—only speak to me !

He mutters—louder and louder ; any other

Than I, with brain less laden, would collect

What he pours forth. Dear Aureole, do but look !

Is it talking or singing this he utters fast ?

Misery, that he should fix me with his eye—

Quick talking to some other all the while !

If he would husband this wild vehemence,

Which frustrates its intent . . . I heard, I know

I heard my name amid those rapid words :

O he will know me yet ! Could I divert

This current—lead it somehow gently back

Into the channels of the past . . . His eye,

Brighter than ever, it must recognize me !

I am Erasmus : I am here to pray

That Eremita use his wondrous skill :

The schools of Paris and of Padua send
These questions for your learning to resolve.
We are your students, noble master. Leave
This wretched cell; what business have you here?
Our class awaits you; come to us once more.
(O agony! the utmost I can do
Touches him not; how else arrest his ear?)
I am commission'd . . . I shall craze like him—
I will be mute, and see what God shall send.

Par. Stay, stay with me!

Fest. I will; I am come here
To stay with you—Festus you loved of old;
Festus, you know, you must know.

Par. Festus! Where's
Aprile, then? Has he not chaunted softly
The melodies I heard all night? I could not
Get to him for a cold hand on my breast,
But I made out his music well enough,
O well enough. If they have fill'd him full
With magical music as they freight a star
With light, and have remitted all his sin,
They will forgive me too, I shall know too . . .

Fest. Festus, Festus !

Par. I would have ask'd if he
KNOWS as he LOVES—if I shall LOVE as well
As KNOW ; but that cold hand, like lead—so cold.

Fest. Dear Aureole . . .

Par. Ah, the curse, Aprile, Aprile !
We get so near—so very, very near.

'T is an old tale : Jove strikes the Titans down
Not when they set about their mountain-piling,
But when another rock would crown their work !
And Phæton—doubtless his first radiant plunge
Astonish'd mortals ; but the gods were calm,
And Jove prepared his thunder : all old tales.

Fest. And what are these to you ?

Par. Ay, they must laugh
So cruelly, so well ; most like I never
Could tread a single pleasure under foot
But they were grinning by my side, were chuckling
To see me toil, and drop away by flakes.
Hell-spawn ! I am glad, most glad, that thus I fail !
Your cunning has o'ershot its aim. One year,
One month, perhaps, and I had served your turn :

You should have curb'd your spite awhile. But now,
Who will believe 't was you that held me back?
Listen : there 's shame, and hissing, and contempt,
And none but laughs who names me—none but spits
Measureless scorn upon me ; 'tis on *me*,
The quack, the liar, the arch-cheat—all on *me*.
And thus your famous plan to sink mankind
In uttermost despair, by teaching them
One of their race had probed the inmost truth,
Had done all man could do, yet fail'd in all—
Your plan has proved abortive. *They* despair ?
Ha, ha ! why they are hooting the empiric,
The ignorant and incapable fool who thrust
Himself upon a work beyond his wits,
Nor doubting but the simplest of themselves
Could bring the matter to triumphant issue !
So pick and choose among them all, accursed !
Try now, persuade some other to slave for you,
To ruin body and soul to work your ends :
No, no ; I am the first and last, I think.

Fest. Sweet friend ; who are accursed ? who has done . . .

Par. What have I done ? you dare ask that ? or *you*,

Brave ones? Oh, *you* can chime in boldly, back'd
By them; and what had *you* to do, wise peers?
Only observe: why fiends may learn from them!
How they talk calmly of my throes—my fierce
Aspirings, terrible watchings—each one claiming
Its price of blood and brain; how they dissect
And sneeringly disparage the few truths
Got at a life's cost; they too hanging the while
About my neck, their lies misleading me,
Their dead names brow-beating me. Wretched crew!
Is there a reason for your hate? My truths
Have shaken a little the palm about each brow?
Just think, Aprile, all these leering dotards
Were bent on nothing less than to be kings
As we! That yellow blear-eyed wretch in chief,
To whom the rest cringe low with feign'd respect—
Galen, of Pergamos and hell; nay speak
The tale, old man—how we met face to face . . . *

Fest. Peace, peace; ah, see!

Par. In truth my delicate witch,

* He did in effect affirm that he had disputed with Galen in the vestibule of hell.

My serpent-queen, you did but well to hide
The juggles I had else detected. Fire
May well run harmless o'er a breast like yours !
The cave was not so darken'd by the smoke
But that your white limbs dazzled me. O white,
And panting as they twinkled, wildly dancing !
I cared not for your passionate gestures then,
But now I have forgotten the charm of charms,
While I remember that quaint dance ; and thus
I am come back, not for those mummeries,
But to love you, and to kiss your little feet,
Soft as an ermine's winter coat !

Fest.

A light

Will struggle through these thronging words at last,
As in the angry and tumultuous west
A soft star trembles through the drifting clouds :
These are the strivings of a spirit which hates
So sad a vault should coop it, and calls up
The past to stand between it and its fate :
Were he at Einsiedeln—or Michal here . . .

Par. Cruel . . . I seek her now—I kneel—I shriek—
I clasp her vesture—but she fades, still fades ;

And she is gone ; sweet human love is gone !

'T is only when they spring to heaven that angels

Reveal themselves to you ; they sit all day

Beside you, and lie down at night by you,

Who care not for their presence—muse or sleep—

And all at once they leave you and you know them !

We are so fool'd, so cheated ! Even now

I am not too secure against foul play :

The shadows deepen, and the walls contract—

No doubt some treachery is going on !

'T is very dusk. Where are we put, Aprile ?

Have they left us in the lurch ? This murky loathsome

Death-trap—this slaughter-house—is not the hall

In the golden city ! Keep by me, Aprile,

There is a hand groping amid the blackness

To catch us. Have the spider-fingers got you,

Dearest ? Hold on me for your life ; if once

They pull you . . . Hold . . .

'T is but a dream—no more.

I have you still—the sun comes out again ;

Let us be happy—all will yet go well !

Let us confer : is it not like, Aprile,

That spite of gone-by trouble, this ordeal pass'd,
The value of my labours ascertain'd,
Just as some stream foams long among the rocks
But after glideth glassy to the sea,
So, full content shall henceforth be my lot ?
What think you, poet ? Louder ! Your clear voice
Vibrates too like a harp-string. Is it so ?
“ How couldst thou still remain on earth, should God
“ Grant thee the great approval thou dost seek ?
“ I, thou, and God can comprehend each other,
“ But men would murmur, and with cause enough ;
“ For when they saw thee, stainless of all sin,
“ Preserved and sanctified by inward light,
“ They would complain—‘ a comfort shut from us,
“ ‘ He drinketh unespied ; for we live on,
“ ‘ Nor taste the quiet of a constant joy,
“ ‘ For ache, and care, and doubt, and weariness,
“ ‘ While he is calm ! Help is vouchsafed to him,
“ ‘ And hid from us ! ’ ” ’T were best consider that :
You reason well, Aprile ; but at least
Let me know this, and die ! Is that too much ?
I will learn this, if God so please, and die !

If thou shalt please, dear God, if thou shalt please !
We are so weak we know our motives least
In their confused beginning : if at first
I sought . . . But wherefore bare my heart to thee ?
I know thy mercy ; and already thoughts
Flock fast about my soul to comfort it,
To intimate I cannot wholly fail,
That love and praise would clasp me willingly
Could I resolve to seek them . . . Thou art good,
And I should be content ; yet—yet first show
I have done wrong in daring ! Rather give
The supernatural consciousness of strength
That fed my youth . . . one only hour of that
With thee to help—O what should bar me then !

Lost, lost ! thus things are order'd here ! God's creatures !
And yet he takes no pride in us !—none, none !
Truly there needs another life to come !
If this be all—(I must tell Festus that)
And other life await us not—for one
I say 'tis a poor cheat, a stupid bungle,

A wretched failure. I, for one, protest
Against it—and I hurl it back with scorn !

Well, onward though alone : small time remains,
And much to do : I must have fruit, must reap
Some profit from my toils. I doubt my body
Will hardly serve me through : while I have labour'd
It has decay'd ; and now that I demand
Its best assistance, it will crumble fast :
A sad thought—a sad fate ! How very full
Of wormwood 'tis, that just at altar-service,
The rapt hymn rising with the rolling smoke,
When glory dawns, and all is at the best—
The sacred fire may flicker and grow faint,
And die, for want of a wood-piler's help !
'Thus fades the flagging body, and the soul
Is pull'd down in the overthrow : well, well—
Let men catch every word—let them lose nothing
Of what I say ; something may yet be done.

They are ruins ! trust me who am one of you !

All ruins—glorious once, but lonely now :
It makes my heart sick to behold you crouching
Beside your desolate fane ; its arches dim,
Its crumbling columns grand against the moon :
Could I but rear them up once more—but that
May never be, so leave them ! Trust me friends,
Why should you linger here when I have built
A far resplendent temple, all your own ?
Trust me, they are but ruins ! see Aprile,
They will not heed ! yet were I not prepar'd
With better refuge for them, never should tongue
Of mine reveal how blank their dwelling is ;
I would sit down in silence with the rest.

Ha, what ? spit at me, and grin and shriek
Contempt into my ear—my ear which drank
God's accents once, and curse me ? Why men, men,
I am not form'd for it ; those hideous eyes
Will be before me sleeping, waking, praying ;
They will not let me even die : spare, spare me,
Sinning or no, forget that, only spare me
That horrible scorn ; you thought I could support it,

But now you see what silly fragile creature
I am. I am not good nor bad enough,
Not Christ, nor Cain, yet even Cain was saved
From hate like this : let me but totter back,
Perhaps I shall forget those jeers which creep
Into my very brain, and shut these scorch'd
Eyelids, and keep those mocking faces out.

Listen Aprile ! I am very calm :
Be not deceived, there is no passion here,
Where the blood leaps like an imprison'd thing.
I am calm : I will exterminate the race !
Enough of that : 'tis said and it shall be . . .
And now be merry—safe and sound am I,
Who broke through their best ranks to get at you,
And such a havoc, such a rout Aprile ! . . .

Fest. Have you no thought, no memory for me
Aureole ? I am so wretched—my pure Michal
Is gone, and you alone are left to me,
And even you forget me—take my hand—
Lean on me thus. Do you not know me Aureole ?

Par. Festus, my own friend, you are come at last ?

As you say, 'tis an awful enterprise—

But you believe I shall go through with it :

'Tis like you, and I thank you ; thank him for me,

Dear Michal ! See how bright St. Saviour's spire

Flames in the sunset ; all its figures quaint

Gay in the glancing light : you might conceive them

A troop of yellow-vested, white-hair'd Jews . . .

Fest. Not that blessed time—not our youth's time, dear
God !

Par. Ha—stay ! true, I forget—all is done since !

And he is come to judge me : how he speaks,

How calm, how well ! yes, it is true, all true ;

All quackery ; all deceit ! myself can laugh

The first at it, if you desire : but still

You know the obstacles which taught me tricks

So foreign to my nature—envy, and hate—

Blind opposition—brutal prejudice—

Bald ignorance—what wonder if I sunk

To humour them the way they most approved ?

My cheats were never palm'd on such as you,

Dear Festus. I will kneel if you require me,

Impart the meagre knowledge I possess,

Explain its bounded nature, and avow
My insufficiency—whate'er you will :
I give the fight up ! let there be an end,
A privacy, an obscure nook for me.
I want to be forgotten even by God !
But if that cannot be, dear Festus, lay me
When I shall die, within some narrow grave,
Not by itself—for that would be too proud—
But where such graves are thickest ; see it look
Nowise distinguish'd from the hillocks round,
So that the peasant at his brother's bed
Shall tread upon my own and know it not ;
So we shall all be equal at the last,
Or class'd according to life's natural ranks,
Fathers, sons, brothers, friends—not rich, nor wise,
Nor gifted : lay me thus, then say “ He lived
“ Too much advanced before his brother men :
“ They kept him still in front ; 't was for their good,
“ But still a dangerous station. Strange it were
“ That he should tell God he had never rank'd
“ With men : so here at least he is a man ! ”

Fest. That God shall take thee to his breast, dear Spirit,

Unto his breast, be sure ! and here on earth
Shall splendour sit upon thy name for ever !
Sun ! all the heaven is glad for thee : what care
If lower mountains light their snowy phares
At thine effulgence, yet acknowledge not
The source of day ? their theft shall be their bale,
For after ages shall retrack the beams,
And put aside the crowd of busy ones,
And worship thee alone—the master-mind,
The thinker, the explorer, the creator ;
And who should sneer at the convulsive throes
With which thy deeds were born would scorn as well
The winding sheet of subterraneous fire
Which, pent and writhing, sends no less at last
Huge islands up amid the simmering sea !
Behold thy might in me ! thou hast infused
Thy soul in mine ; and I am grand as thou,
Seeing I comprehend thee—I so simple,
Thou so august ! I recognize thee first ;
I saw thee rise, and I have watch'd thee well,
And though no glance reveal that thou acceptest

My homage—thus no less I proffer it,
And bid thee enter gloriously thy rest!

Par. Festus!

Fest. I am for noble Aureole, God!
I am upon his side, come weal or woe!
His portion shall be mine! He has done well!
I would have sinn'd, had I been strong enough,
As he has sinn'd! Reward him or I waive
Reward! If thou canst find no place for him,
He shall be king elsewhere, and I will be
His slave for ever! . . . There are two of us!

Par. Dear Festus!

Fest. Here, dear Aureole! ever by you!

Par. Nay, speak on, or I dream again. Speak on!
Some story, any thing—only your voice.
I shall dream else. Speak on!

Fest. Thus the Mayne glideth
Where my love abideth;
Sleep's no softer: it proceeds
On through lawns, on through meads,
On and on, whate'er befall,
Meandering and musical,

Though the niggard pasturage
Bears not on its shaven edge
Aught but weeds and waving grasses
To behold it as it passes,
Save here and there a scanty patch
Of primroses, too faint to catch
A weary bee . . .

Par. More, more; say on!

Fest. And scarce it pushes
Its gentle way through strangling rushes,
Where the glossy king-fisher
Flutters when noon-heats are near,
Glad the shelving banks to shun,
Red and steaming in the sun,
Where the shrew-mouse with pale throat
Burrows, and the speckled stoat,
Where the quick sand-pipers flit
In and out the soft and wet
Clay that breeds them, brown as they.
Nought disturbs its quiet way,
Save some lazy stork that springs,
Trailing it with legs and wings,

Whom the shy fox from the hill

Arouses . . .

Par. My heart ! they loose my heart, those simple words ;

Its darkness passes, which nought else could touch ;

Like some dark snake that force may not expel,

Which glideth out to music sweet and low.

What were you doing when your voice broke through

A chaos of ugly images ? . . . It is you, indeed !

Are you alone here ?

Fest. All alone : you know me ?

This cell ?

Par. An unexceptionable vault—

Good brick and stone—the bats kept out, the rats

Kept in—a snug nook : how should I mistake it ?

Fest. But wherefore am I here ?

Par. Ah ! well remember'd :

Why, for a purpose—for a purpose, Festus !

'Tis like me : here I trifle while time fleets,

And this occasion, lost, will ne'er return !

You are here to be instructed. I will tell

Their message ; but I have so much to say,

I fear to leave half out : all is confused
Within ; but doubtless you will learn in time.
They would not have dispatch'd me else : no doubt
I shall see clearer soon.

Fest. Tell me but this—
You are not in despair ?

Par. I ? and for what ?

Fest. Alas, alas ! he knows not, as I fear'd . . .

Par. What is it you would ask me with that earnest,
Dear, searching face ?

Fest. How feel you, Aureole ?

Par. Well ;

Well : 't is a strange thing. I am dying, Festus,
And now the storm of life is fast subsiding
I first perceive how swift the whirl has been :
I was calm then, who am so dizzy now—
Calm in the thick of the tempest, but no less
A partner of its motion, and mix'd up
With its career. The hurricane is spent,
And the good boat speeds through the bright'ning weather ;
But is it earth or sea that heaves below ?
The gulf rolls like a meadow-swell, o'erstrewn

With ravaged boughs and remnants of the shore.
And now some islet, loosen'd from the land,
Swims past with all its trees, sailing to ocean.
And now the air is full of up-torn canes,
Like strippings from the fan-trees ; tamarisks
Unrooted, with their birds still clinging to them,
All high in the wind. Even so my varied life
Drifts by me. I am young, old, happy, sad,
Hoping, desponding, acting, taking rest,
And all at once : that is, those past conditions
Flock back upon me. If I choose to single
Some certain epoch from the crowd, 't is but
To will, and straight the rest dissolve away,
And that particular state is present only,
With all its circumstance forgotten long,
But now distinct and vivid as at first—
I being a careless looker-on, nought more !
Indifferent and amused, but nothing more !
And this is death : I understand it all.
There is new being waiting me, and new
Perceptions must be born in me before
I plunge therein ; this last is Death's affair,

And he is filling me minute by minute
With power, and while my foot is on the threshold
Of boundless life—the portals yet unopen'd—
All preparations not complete within—
I turn new knowledge upon old events,
And the effect is . . . But I must not tell;
It is not fair. Your own turn will arrive
Some day. Dear Festus you will die like me—
Your turn will come so that you do but wait!

Fest. 'T is of that past life that I burn to hear . . .

Par. You wonder it engages me just now?
In truth, I wonder too. What's life to me?
Where'er I look is fire, where'er I listen
Music, and where I tend bliss evermore.
Yet I can not refrain: 't is a refined
Delight to view those chances once again.
I am so near the perils I escape,
That I must play with them and turn them over,
To feel how fully they are past and gone.
Still it is like some further cause exists
For this peculiar mood—some hidden purpose;
Did I not tell you something of it, Festus?

I had it fast, but it has somehow slipt
Away from me ; it will return anon.

Fest. (Indeed his cheek seems young again, his voice
Complete with its old tones—that little laugh
Concluding every phrase ; with up-turn'd eye,
As though one stoop'd above his head, to whom
He look'd for confirmation and approval :
Where was it gone so long, so well preserved ?
And the fore-finger pointing as he speaks,
Like one who traces in an open book
The matter he declares ; 't is many a year
Since I remark'd it last : and this in him . . .
But now a ghastly wreck !)

And can it be,
Dear Aureole, you have then found out at last
The utter vanity of worldly things ?
That man is made for weakness, and should wait
In patient ignorance till God appoint . . .

Par. Ha, the purpose ; the true purpose : that is it !
How could I fail to apprehend ! You here,
I thus ! But no more trifling ; I see all,
I know all : my last mission shall be done

If strength suffice. No trifling! Stay; this posture
Hardly befits one thus about to speak:

I will arise.

Fest. Dear Aureole, are you wild?

You cannot leave your couch.

Par. No help; no help;

Not even your hand. So! there, I stand once more!

Speak from a couch? why I ne'er lectured thus.

My gown—the scarlet, lined with fur; now put

The chain about my neck; my signet-ring

Is still upon my hand, I think—even so;

Last, my good sword; ha, trusty Azoth, leapest

Beneath thy master's grasp for the last time?

This couch shall be my throne: I bid this cell

Be consecrate; this wretched bed become

A shrine; for here God speaks to men through me!

Now, Festus, I am ready to begin.

Fest. I am blind with wonder.

Par. Listen, therefore, Festus!

There will be time enough, but none to spare.

I must content myself with telling only

The most important points. You doubtless feel

That I am happy, Festus; very happy.

No offering ; if I render up my soul
Without the fruits it was ordain'd to bear ;
If I appear to love God better for
My sins, as one who has no claim on him,
Be not deceived : it may be only thus
With me ; or higher prizes may await
The mortal persevering to the end.
Beside, I am not all so valueless ;
I have been something, though too soon I left
Following the instincts of that happy time . . .

Fest. What happy time ? For God's sake, for man's
sake,

What time was happy ? All I hope to know
That answer will decide. What happy time ?

Par. When, but the time I vow'd myself to man.

Fest. Great God, thy judgments are inscrutable !

Par. Yes, it was in me ; I was born for it—

I, Paracelsus : it was mine by right.

Doubtless a searching and impetuous spirit
Might learn from its own motions that some task
Like this awaited it about the world ;
Might seek somewhere in this blank life of ours

For fit delights to stay its longings vast ;
And, grappling strenuously with Fate, compel her
To fill the creature full whom she dared frame
Hungry for joy ; and, bravely tyrannous,
Grow in demand, still craving more and more,
And make the joy conceded prove a pledge
Of further joy to follow—bating nothing
Of its desires, but seizing all pretence
To turn the knowledge and the rapture wrung
From Destiny as an extreme, last boon,
Into occasion for new covetings,
New strifes, new triumphs. Doubtless a strong spirit
Might do all this unaided and alone,
So glorious is our nature, so august
Man's inborn uninstructed impulses—
His naked spirit so majestic !
But it was born in me : I was made so.
Thus much time saved : the feverish appetites,
The tumult of unproved desire, the aimless
Uncertain yearnings, near-sighted ambition,
Distrust, mistake, and all that ends in tears
Were saved me, though the lion heart repines not

At working through such lets its purpose out.
You may be sure I was not all exempt
From human trouble : just so much of doubt
As bade me plant a surer foot upon
The sun-road—kept my eye unruin'd mid
The fierce and flashing splendour—set my heart
Trembling so much as warn'd me I stood there
On sufferance—not to idly gaze, but have
Remembrance of a darkling race ; save that,
I stood at first where all aspire at last
To reach—the secret of the world was mine.
I knew, I felt, not as one knows or feels
Aught else ; a vast perception unexpress'd,
Uncomprehended by our narrow thought,
But somehow felt and known in every shift
And change in the spirit I bear—nay, dare I say,
In every pore of this fast-fading frame
I felt, I knew what God is, what we are,*
What life is—how God tastes an infinite joy
In infinite ways—one everlasting bliss,

* "Paracelse faisait profession du Panthéisme le plus grossier."—*Renauldin*.

From whom all being emanates, all power
Proceeds ; in whom is life for evermore,
Yet whom existence in its lowest form
Includes ; where dwells enjoyment there is He !
With still a flying point of bliss remote—
A happiness in store afar—a sphere
Of distant glory in full view ; thus climbs
Pleasure its heights for ever and for ever !
The centre-fire heaves underneath the earth,
And the earth changes like a human face ;
The molten ore bursts up among the rocks—
Winds into the stone's heart—outbranches bright
In hidden mines—spots barren river-beds—
Crumbles into fine sand where sunbeams bask—
God joys therein ! The wroth sea's waves are edged
With foam, white as the bitten lip of Hate :
When in the solitary waste strange groups
Of young volcanos come up, cyclops-like,
Staring together with their eyes on flame,
God tastes a pleasure in their uncouth pride !
Then all is still : earth is a wintry clod ;
But spring-wind, like a dancing psaltress, passes

Over its breast to waken it ; rare verdure
Buds here and there upon rough banks, between
The wither'd tree-roots and the cracks of frost,
Like a smile striving with a wrinkled face ;
The grass grows bright, the boughs are swoln with blooms,
Like chrysalids impatient for the air ;
The shining dorrs are busy ; beetles run
Along the furrows, ants make their ado ;
Above birds fly in merry flocks—the lark
Soars up and up, shivering for very joy ;
Afar the ocean sleeps ; white fishing-gulls
Flit where the strand is purple with its tribe
Of nested limpets ; savage creatures seek
Their loves in wood and plain ; and God renews
His ancient rapture ! Thus He dwells in all,
From life's minute beginnings, up at last
To man—the consummation of this scheme
Of being—the completion of this sphere
Of life : whose attributes had here and there
Been scatter'd o'er the visible world before,
Asking to be combin'd—dim fragments meant
To be united in some wondrous whole—

Imperfect qualities throughout creation,
Suggesting some one creature yet to make—
(So would a spirit deem, intent on watching
The purpose of the world from its faint rise
To its mature developement)—some point
Whereto those wandering rays should all converge—
Might : neither put forth blindly, nor controll'd
Calmly by perfect knowledge—to be used
At risk—inspir'd or check'd by hope and fear—
Knowledge : not intuition, but the slow
Uncertain fruit of an enhancing toil,
Strengthen'd by love—love : not serenely pure,
But power from weakness, like a chance-sown plant
Which, cast on stubborn soil, puts forth changed buds,
And softer stains, unknown in happier climes :
Love which endures, and doubts, and is oppress'd
And cherish'd—suffering much, and much sustain'd—
A blind, unfailing, and devoted love :
And half-enlighten'd, often-chequer'd trust :
Anticipations, hints of these and more
Are strewn confusedly everywhere—all seek
An object to possess and stamp their own ;

All shape out dimly the forthcoming race,
The heir of hopes too fair to turn out false,
And Man appears at last : so far the seal
Is put on life : one stage of being complete,
One scheme wound up ; and from the grand result
A supplementary reflux of light,
Illustrates all the inferior grades, explains
Each back step in the circle : not alone
The clear dawn of those qualities shines out,
But the new glory mixes with the heaven
And earth. Man, once descried, imprints for ever
His presence on all lifeless things—the winds
Are henceforth voices, wailing, or a shout,
A querulous mutter, or a quick gay laugh—
Never a senseless gust now man is born :
The herded pines commune, and have deep thoughts,
A secret they assemble to discuss,
When the sun drops behind their trunks which glare
Like grates of hell : the peerless cup afloat
Of the lake-lily is an urn, some nymph
Swims bearing high above her head : no bird
Whistles unseen, but through the gaps above

That let light in upon the gloomy woods,
A shape peeps from the breezy forest-top,
Arch with small pucker'd mouth and mocking eye :
The morn has enterprise—deep quiet droops
With evening—triumph when the sun takes rest—
Voluptuous transport when the corn-fields ripen
Beneath a warm moon like a happy face :
And this to fill us with regard for man,
Deep apprehension of his passing worth,
Desire to work his proper nature out,
To ascertain his rank and final place,
For all these things tend upward—progress is
The law of life—man is not man as yet :
Nor shall I deem his object served, his end
Attain'd, his genuine strength put fairly out,
While only here and there a star dispels
The darkness—here and there a towering mind
O'erlooks its crawling fellows : when the host
Is out at once to the despair of night ;
When all mankind is perfected alike,
Equal in full-blown powers—then, not till then,
Begins the general infancy of man ;

For wherefore make account of feverish starts
Of restless members of a dormant whole—
Impatient nerves which quiver while the body
Slumbers as in a grave ? O long ago
The brow was twitch'd, the tremulous lids astir,
The peaceful mouth disturb'd—half-utter'd speech
Ruffled the lip ; sometimes the teeth were set,
The breath drawn sharp, the strong right-hand clench'd
stronger—

As it would pluck a lion by the maw :
The glorious creature laugh'd out even in sleep !
But when arous'd—each giant-limb awake,
Each sinew strung, the great heart pulsing fast—
He shall start up, and stand on his own earth—
Then shall his long triumphant march begin—
Thence shall his being date ; what thus collected
He shall achieve, shall be set down to him !
When all the race is perfected alike
As *man*, that is : all tended to mankind
And, man produced, all has its end thus far ;
But in completed man begins anew
A tendency to God. Prognostics told

Man's near approach ; so in man's self arise
August anticipations, symbols, types
Of a dim splendour ever on before,
In the eternal circle life pursues :
For men begin to pass their nature's bound,
To have new hopes and cares which fast supplant
Their proper joys and griefs ; they grow too great
For narrow creeds of right and wrong, which fade
Before unmeasur'd thirst for good ; while peace
Rises within them ever more and more.
Such men are even now upon the earth—
Serene amid the half-form'd creatures round,
Whom they should save and join with them at last :
Such was my task, and I was born to it—
Free, as I said but now, from much that chains
Spirits high-dower'd, but limited and vex'd
By a divided and delusive aim—
A shadow mocking a reality
Whose truth avails not wholly to disperse
The flitting mimic which itself has bred,
And so remains perplex'd and nigh put out
By its fantastic fellow's wavering gleam ;

But from the first, the cheat could lure me not :
I never fashion'd out a fancied good
Distinct from man's ; a service to be done—
A glory to be minister'd unto,
With powers put forth at man's expense, withdrawn
From labouring in his behalf ; a strength
Reserved that might avail him : I ne'er cared
Lest his success run counter to success
Elsewhere : for God is glorified in man,
And to man's glory vow'd I soul and limb.
Yet, constituted thus, and thus endow'd,
I fail'd : I gazed on power till I grew blind.
Power : I could not take my eyes from that—
That only was to be preserved, increased
At any risk ; display'd, struck out at once—
The sign, and note, and character of man.
I saw no use in the past : only a scene
Of degradation, ugliness, and tears ;
The record of disgraces best forgotten ;
A sullen page in human chronicles
To be erased : I saw no cause why man
Should not be all-sufficient even now ;

Or why his annals should be forced to tell
That once the tide of light about to break
Upon the world was seal'd within its spring,
Although my own name led the brightness in :
I would have had one day, one moment's space,
Change man's condition, push each slumbering claim
To mastery o'er the elemental world
At once to full maturity : then roll
Oblivion o'er its work, and hide from man
What night had usher'd morn. Not so, dear child
Of after-days, wilt thou reject the Past,
Big with deep warnings of the proper tenure
By which thou hast the earth : for thee the Present
Shall have distinct and trembling beauty, seen
Beside its shadow—whence, in strong relief,
Its features shall stand out : nor yet on thee
Shall burst the Future, as successive zones
Of several wonder open on some spirit
Flying secure and glad from heaven to heaven ;
But hope, and fear, and love, shall keep thee man !
All this was hid from me : as one by one
My dreams grew dim, my wide aims circumscribed—

As actual good within my reach decreased,
While obstacles sprung up this way and that,
To keep me from effecting half the sum,
Small as it proved : as objects, mean within
The primal aggregate, remain'd alone
Of all the company, and, even the least,
More than a match for my concentrated strength . . .
What wonder if I saw no way to shun
Despair ? for power seem'd shut from man for ever.
In this conjuncture, as I pray'd to die,
A strange adventure made me know One Sin
Had spotted my career from its uprise ;
And as the poor melodious wretch disburthen'd
His heart, and moan'd his weakness in my ear,
I learn'd my own deep error : love's undoing
Taught me the worth of love in man's estate,
And what proportion love should hold with power
In his right constitution : love preceding
Power—with much power always much more love ;
Love still too straiten'd in its present means,
And earnest for new power to set it free.

I learn'd this, and supposed the whole was learn'd :
And thus, when men received with stupid wonder
My first revealings—would have worshipp'd me—
And I despised and loathed their proffer'd praise ;
When, with awaken'd eyes, they took revenge
For past credulity in casting shame
On my real knowledge—and I hated them—
It was not strange I saw no good in man,
To overbalance all the wear and waste
Of faculties, display'd in vain, but born
To prosper in some better sphere : and why ?
In my own heart love had not been made wise
To trace love's faint beginnings in mankind—
To know even hate is but a mask of love's ;
To see a good in evil, and a hope
In ill-success. To sympathize—be proud
Of their half-reasons, faint aspirings, struggles
Dimly for truth—their poorest fallacies,
And prejudice, and fears, and cares, and doubts ;
All with a touch of nobleness, for all
Their error, all ambitious, upward tending,

Like plants in mines which never saw the sun,
But dream of him, and guess where he may be,
And do their best to climb and get to him :
All this I knew not, and I fail'd ; let men
Regard me, and the poet dead long ago
Who loved too rashly ; and shape forth a third,
And better temper'd spirit, warn'd by both ;
As from the over-radiant star too mad
To drink the light-springs, beamless thence itself—
And the dark orb which borders the abyss,
Ingulf'd in icy night, might have its course
A temperate and equidistant world :
Meanwhile, I have done well, though not all well.
As yet men cannot do without contempt—
'T is for their good, and therefore fit awhile
That they reject me, and speak scorn of me ;
But after, they will know me well : I stoop
Into a dark tremendous sea of cloud,
But 't is but for a time ; I press God's lamp
Close to my breast—its splendour, soon or late,
Will pierce the gloom : I shall emerge one day.
You understand me ? I have said enough ?

Fest. Now die, dear Aureole !

Par. Festus, let my hand—

This hand, lie in your own . . . my own true friend !

Aprile ! hand in hand with you, Aprile !

Fest. And this was Paracelsus !

NOTE.

NOTE.

THE liberties I have taken with my subject are very trifling; and the reader may slip the foregoing scenes between the leaves of any memoir of Paracelsus he pleases, by way of commentary. To prove this, I subjoin a popular account, translated from the "*Biographie Universelle, Paris, 1822*," which I select, not as the best, certainly, but as being at hand, and sufficiently concise for my purpose. I also append a few notes, in order to correct those parts which do not bear out my own view of the character of Paracelsus; and have incorporated with them a notice or two, illustrative of the poem itself.

"PARACELSUS (*Philippus Aureolus Theophrastus Bombastus ab Hohenheim*) was born in 1493 at Einsiedeln,* a little

* Hohenheim, Einsiedeln, and the Latin Eremus (whence Paracelsus is sometimes called, as in the correspondence of Erasmus, Eremita) are, I suppose, one and the same town.

town in the canton of Schwitz, some leagues distant from Zurich. His father, who exercised the profession of medicine at Villach, in Carinthia, was nearly related to George Bombast de Hohenheim, who became in the event Grand Prior of the Order of Malta; consequently Paracelsus could not spring from the dregs of the people, as Thomas Erastus, his sworn enemy, pretends.* It appears that his elementary education was much neglected, and that he spent part of his youth in pursuing the life common to the travelling *literati* of the age; that is to say, in wandering from country to country, predicting the future from the inspection of the stars and the lines of the hand, evoking apparitions, and repeating the different operations of magic and alchemy, in which he had been initiated whether by his father or by various ecclesiastics, among the number of whom he particularizes the Abbot Trithem,⁽¹⁾ and many German bishops.

* I shall disguise M. Renauldin's next sentence a little. "Hic (Erastus sc.) Paracelsum trimum à milite quodam, alii à sue exectum ferunt : constat imberbem illum et *μισογυνον* fuisse." A standing High-Dutch joke in those days at the expense of a vast number of learned men, as may be seen by referring to such rubbish as Melander's *Jocoseria*, &c. &c. In the prints from his portrait by Tintoretto, painted a year before his death, Paracelsus is *barbatus* at all events. But Erastus was never without a good reason for his faith—e.g. "Helvetium fuisse (P.) vix credo, vix enim ea regio tale monstrum ediderit."—*De Med. Nová*.

“As Paracelsus displays everywhere an ignorance of the rudiments of the most ordinary knowledge, it is not probable that he should have ever studied seriously in the schools: he contented himself with visiting the Universities of Germany, France, and Italy; and in spite of his boasting himself to have been the ornament of those institutions, there is no proof of his having legally acquired the title of Doctor, which he assumes. It is only known that he applied himself long, under the direction of the wealthy Sigismond Fugger, of Schwatz, to the discovery of the *Magnum Opus*.

“Paracelsus travelled among the mountains of Bohemia, in the East, and in Sweden, in order to inspect the labours of the miners, to be initiated in the mysteries of the oriental adepts, and to observe the secrets of nature and the famous mountain of loadstone.⁽²⁾ He professes also to have visited Spain, Portugal, Prussia, Poland, and Transylvania, where he communicated freely, not merely with the physicians, but with the old women, charlatans, and conjurors, of these several lands. It is even believed that he extended his journeyings as far as Egypt and Tartary, and that he accompanied the son of the Khan of the Tartars to Constantinople, for the purpose of obtaining the secret of the tincture of *Trismegistus*, from a Greek who inhabited that capital.

“The period of his return to Germany is unknown: it is

only certain that, at about the age of 33, many astonishing cures which he wrought on eminent personages procured him such a celebrity, that he was called in 1526, on the recommendation of Œcolampadius,⁽³⁾ to fill a chair of physic and surgery at the University of Basil. There Paracelsus began by burning publicly in the amphitheatre the works of Avicenna and Galen, assuring his auditors that the latchets of his shoes were more instructed than those two physicians; that all the Universities, all the writers put together, were less gifted than the hairs of his beard and of the crown of his head; and that, finally, he was to be regarded as the legitimate monarch of medicine. ‘You shall follow me,’ cried he, ‘you, Avicenna, Galen, Rhasis, Montagnana, Mesue; you, Gentlemen of Paris, Montpellier, Germany, Cologne, Vienna,* and all soever whom the Rhine and the Danube nourish; you who inhabit the isles of the sea; you, likewise, Dalmatians, Athenians; thou, Arab; thou, Greek; thou, Jew; all shall follow me, and the monarchy shall be mine.’ †

* Erastus, who relates this, here oddly remarks, “*mirum quod non et Garantantos, Indos et Anglos adjunxit.*”

† See his works *passim*. I must give one specimen:—Somebody had been styling him “Luther alter;” “and why not?” he asks, as he well might; “Luther is abundantly learned, therefore you hate him and me; but we are at least a match for you.” “*Nam et contra vos et vestros universos principes Avicennam, Galenum, Aristotelem, &c. me satis superque munitum esse novi. Et*

“ But at Basil it was speedily perceived that the new Professor was no better than an egregious quack. Scarcely had a year elapsed before his lectures had fairly driven away an audience incapable of comprehending their emphatic jargon. That which above all contributed to sully his reputation was the debauched life he led. According to the testimony of Oporinus, who lived two years in his intimacy, Paracelsus scarcely ever ascended the lecture-desk unless half drunk, and only dictated to his secretaries when in a state of intoxication : if summoned to attend the sick, he rarely proceeded thither without previously drenching himself with wine.⁽⁴⁾ He was accustomed to retire to bed without changing his clothes ; sometimes he spent the night in pot-houses with the peasants, and in the morning knew no longer what he was about ; and, nevertheless, up to the age of 25 his only drink had been water.

“ At length, fearful of being punished for a serious outrage on a magistrate,⁽⁵⁾ he fled from Basil towards the end of the year 27, and took refuge in Alsatia, whither he caused Oporinus to follow with his chymical apparatus.

vertex iste meus calvus ac depilis multò plura et sublimiora novit quàm vester vel Avicenna vel universæ academiæ. Proдите, et signum date, qui viri sitis, quid roboris habeatis? quid autem sitis? Doctores et magistri, pediculos pectentes, et fricantes podicem.”—*Frag. Med.*

“He then entered once more upon the career of ambulatory theosophist.* Accordingly we find him at Colmar in 1528; at Nuremburg in 1529; at St. Gall in 1531; at Pfeffers in 1535; at Augsburg in 1536: he next made some stay in Moravia, where he still further compromised his reputation by the loss of many distinguished patients, which compelled him to betake himself to Vienna; from thence he passed into Hungary, and in 1538 was at Viliach, where he dedicated his ‘Chronicle’ to the States of Carinthia, in gratitude for the many kindnesses with which they had honoured his father. Finally, from Mindelheim, where he was in 1540, Paracelsus proceeded to Salzburg, where he died in the Hospital of St. Stephen (*Sebastian*, he means), Sept. 24, 1541.”—(Here follows a criticism on his writings, which I omit.)

* So migratory a life could afford Paracelsus but little leisure for application to books, and accordingly he informs us that for the space of ten years he never opened a single volume, and that his whole medical library was not composed of six sheets: in effect, the inventory drawn up after his death states that the only books which he left were the Bible, the New Testament, the Commentaries of St. Jerome on the Gospels, a printed volume on Medicine, and seven manuscripts.—*Renauldin*.

(1) Then Bishop of Spanheim, and residing at Würzburg in Franconia, a town situated in a grassy fertile country, whence its Latin name Herbipolis. He was much visited there by learned men, as may be seen by his *Epistolæ Familiares*. Hag. 1536. Among others by his staunch friend Cor. Agrippa, to whom he dates from thence in 1510 a letter in answer to the dedicatory epistle prefixed to the treatise *de Occult. Phil.* which last contains the following ominous allusion to his sojourn: “Quum nuper tecum, R. P. in cænobio tuo apud Herbipolim aliquamdiu conversatus, multa de chymicis, multa de magicis, multa de cabalisticis, cæterisque quæ adhuc in occulto delitescunt, arcanis scientiis atque artibus unà contulissemus,” &c. &c.

(2) “Inexplebilis illa aviditas naturæ perscrutandi secreta et reconditarum suppellectile scientiarum animum locupletandi, uno eodemque loco, diu persistere non patiebatur, sed mercurii instar, omnes terras, nationes et urbes perlustrandi igniculos supposebat et cum viris naturæ scrutatoribus, chymicis præsertim, ore tenus conferret, et quæ diutius laboribus nocturnisque vigiliis inveni-
nerant una vel altera communicatione obtineret.”—*Bitiskius in Præfat.* “Patris auxilio primùm, deinde propriâ industriâ doctissimos viros in Germaniâ, Italiâ, Galliâ, Hispaniâ, aliisque Europæ regionibus, nactus est præceptores; quorum liberali doctrinâ, et

potissimùm propriâ inquisitione ut qui esset ingenio acutissimo ac fere divino, tantùm profecit, ut multi testati sint, in universa philosophiâ, tam ardua, tam arcana et abdita eruisse mortalium neminem.”—*Melch. Adam. in Vit. Germ. Medic.* “Paracelsus qui in intima naturæ viscera sic penitùs introierit, metallorum stirpiumque vires et facultates tam incredibili ingenii acumine exploraverit ac perviderit; ad morbos omnes vel desperatos et opinione hominum insanabiles percurandum; ut cum Theophrasto nata primùm medicina perfectaue videtur.”—*Petri Rami Orat. de Basileâ.* His passion for wandering is best described in his own words: “Ecce amatorem adolescentem difficillimi itineris hand’ piget, ut venustam saltem puellam vel fæminam aspiciat: quanto minus nobilissimarum artium amore laboris ac cujuslibet tædii pigebit?” &c.—*Defensiones Septem adversus Æmulos suos.* 1573. *Def. 4ta.* “*De peregrinationibus et exilio.*”

(3) The reader will remember that it was in conjunction with Œcolampadius, then Divinity-Professor at Basil, that Zuinglius published, in 1528, an answer to Luther’s Confession of Faith, and that he accompanied him to the subsequent conference with Luther and Melancthon at Marpurg. Their letters fill a large volume. — *D. D. Johannis Œcolampadii et Huldrici Zuinglii Epistolarum lib. quatuor.* Bas. 1536. It must be also observed, that Zuinglius began to preach in 1516, and at Zurich in 1519, and that in 1525 the mass was abolished in the cantons. The

tenets of Œcolampadius were supposed to be more evangelical than those at that period maintained by the glorious German, and our brave Bishop Fisher attacked them as the fouler heresy:—

“About this time arose out of Luther’s school one Œcolampadius, like a mighty and fierce giant; who, as his master had gone beyond the church, went beyond his master (or else it had been impossible he could have been reputed the better scholar) who denied the real presence: him, this worthy champion (the Bishop) sets upon, and with five books (like so many smooth stones taken out of the river that doth always run with living water) slays the Philistine; which five books were written in the year of our Lord 1526, at which time he had governed the See of Rochester 20 years.”—*Life of Bp. Fisher*. 1655. Now there is no doubt of the Protestantism of Paracelsus, Erasmus, Agrippa, &c. but the nonconformity of Paracelsus was always scandalous. L. Crasso (*Elogj d’Huomini Letterati*. Ven. 1666) informs us that his books were excommunicated by the Church. Quensledt (*de Patr. Doct.*) affirms “nec tantùm novæ medicinæ, verum etiam novæ theologiæ autor est.” Delrio, in his *Disquisit. Magicar.* classes him among those “partim atheos, partim hæreticos” (*lib. 1. cap. 3.*) “Omnino tamen multa theologica in ejusdem scriptis planè atheismum olent, ac duriusculè sonant in auribus vere Christiani.”

D. Gabrielis Clauderi Schediasma de Tinct. Univ. Norimb. 1736.

I shall only add one more authority—“Oporinus dicit se (Para-

celsum) aliquando Lutherum et Papam, non minùs quam nunc Galenum et Hippocratem redacturum in ordinem minabatur, neque enim eorum qui hactenus in scripturam sacram scripsissent, sive veteres, sive recentiores, quenquam scripturæ nucleum rectè eruisse, sed circa corticem et quasi membranam tantùm hæreere.” —*Th. Erastus. Disputat. de Med. Novâ.* These and similar notions had their due effect on Oporinus, who, says Zuingerus, in his *Theatrum*, “longum vale dixit ei (Paracelso) ne ob præceptoris, alioqui amicissimi, horrendas blasphemias ipse quoque aliquando pænas Deo. opt. max. lueret.”

(4) His defenders allow the drunkenness. Take a sample of their excuses: “Gentis hoc, non viri vitium est, a Taciti seculo ad nostrum usque non interrupto filo devolutum, sinceritati forte Germanæ coævum, et nescio an aliquo consanguinitatis vinculo junctum.”—*Bitiskius.* The other charges were chiefly trumped up by Oporinus: “Domi, quod Oporinus amanuensis ejus sæpè narravit, nunquam nisi potus ad explicanda sua accessit, atque in medio conclavi ad columnam *τετυφωμένος* adsistens, apprehenso manibus capulo ensis, cujus *κοίλωμα* hospitium præbuit ut aiunt spiritui familiari, imaginationes aut concepta sua protulit:—alii illud quod in capulo habuit, ab ipso Azoth appellatum Medicinam fuisse præstantissimam aut lapidem Philosophicum putant.”—*Melch. Adam.* This famous sword was no laughing matter in

those days, and is now a material feature in the popular idea of Paracelsus. I recollect a couple of allusions to it in our own literature, at the moment.

Ne had been known the Danish Gonswart,
Or Paracelsus with his long sword.

Volpone. Act 2. sc. 2.

Bumbastus kept a Devil's bird
Shut in the pummel of his sword,
That taught him all the cunning pranks,
Of past and future mountebanks.

Hudibras. Part 2. Cant. 3.

This Azoth was simply "*laudanum suum.*" But in his time he was commonly believed to possess the double tincture—the power of curing diseases, and transmuting metals. Oporinus often witnessed, as he declares, both these effects, as did also Franciscus, the servant of Paracelsus, who describes, in a letter to Neander, a successful projection at which he was present, and the results of which, good golden ingots, were confided to his trust. For the other quality, let the following vouch among many others:—
"Degebat Theophrastus Norimbergæ prociscus à Medentibus illius urbis, et vaniloquus deceptorque proclamatus, qui, ut laboranti famæ subveniat, viros quosdam autoritatis summæ in Rei publicâ illâ adit, et infamiæ amoliendæ, artique suæ asserendæ, specimen ejus pollicetur editurum, nullo stipendio vel accepto pretio, horum faciles præbentium aures jussu elephantiacos aliquot, à comunione hominum cæterorum segregatos, et in valetudinarium

detrusos, alieno arbitrio eliguntur, quos virtute singulari remedium suorum Theophrastus à fœdâ Græcorum leprâ mundat, pristinaeque sanitati restituit; conservat illustre harum curationum urbs in archivis suis testimonium.”—*Bitiskius*.* It is to be remarked that Oporinus afterward repented of his treachery: “Sed resipuit tandem, et quem vivum convitiis insectatus fuerat defunctum veneratione prosequutus, infames famæ præceptoris morsus in remorsus conscientiae conversi pœnitentiâ, heu nimis tardâ vulnera clausêre exanimi quæ spiranti inflixerant.” For these “bites” of Oporinus, see “*Disputat. Erasti*,” and Andreas Jociscus “*Oratio de vit. et ob. Opori.* ;” for the “remorse,” Mic. Toxites in *præf. Testamenti*, and Conringius (otherwise an enemy of Paracelsus), who says it was contained in a letter from Oporinus to Doctor Vegerus.†

Whatever the moderns may think of these marvellous attributes, they have confirmed P.’s title to be considered the father of modern chymistry. Gerardus Vossius “*De Philosâ. et Philosum. sectis*,”

* The premature death of Paracelsus casts no manner of doubt on the fact of his having possessed the Elixir Vitæ: the alchemists have abundant reasons to adduce, from which I select the following, as explanatory of a property of the Tincture not calculated on by its votaries: “Objectionem illam, quod Paracelsus non fuerit longævus, nonnulli quoque solvunt per rationes physicas: vitæ nimirum abbreviationem fortasse talibus accidere posse, ob Tincturam frequentiore ac largiore dosi sumtam, dum a summe efficaci et penetrabili hujus virtute calor innatus quasi suffocatur.”—*Gabrielis Clauderi Schediasma*.

† For a good defence of Paracelsus I refer the reader to Olaus Borrichius’ treatise—“*Hermetis &c. sapientia vindicata*. 1674.”

thus prefaces the ninth section of *Cap. 9*, “*De Chymiâ*”—“*Nobilem hanc medicinæ partem, diu sepultam avorum ætate quasi ab orco revocavit Th. Paracelsus.*” I suppose many hints lie scattered in his neglected books, which clever appropriators have since developed with applause. Thus, it appears from his treatise “*De Phlebotomiâ*,” and elsewhere, that he had discovered the circulation of the blood and the sanguification of the heart; as did after him Andreas Cæsalpinus of Arezzo, who died 1603, aged 84, as Bayle observes. Even Lavater quotes a passage from his work, “*De naturâ Rerum*,” on practical Physiognomy, in which his definitions and axioms are precise enough: he adds, “though an astrological enthusiast, a man of prodigious genius.” See Holcroft’s Translation, vol. iii. p. 179—“*The Eyes.*” While on the subject of the writings of Paracelsus, I may explain a passage in the third part of the Poem. He was, as I have said, unwilling to publish his works, but in effect did publish a vast number. Valentius (*in Præfat in Paramyr*) declares “quod ad librorum P*i*. copiam attinet, audio à Germanis prope trecentos resenseri.” “O fæcunditas ingenii!” adds he appositely. Many of these were, however, spurious; and Fred. Bitiskius gives his good edition (3 vols. fol. Gen. 1658) “rejectis suppositis solo ipsius nomine superbientibus quorum ingeus circumfertur numerus.” The rest were “charissimum et pretiosissimum authoris piguus, extorsum potiùs ab illo quàm obtentum:” “Jam minime eo volente atque jubente hæc ipsius scripta in lucem prodiisse videntur; quippe quæ muro in-

clusa ipso absente servi cujusdam indicio, furto surrepta atque sublata sunt," says Valentius. These have been the study of a host of commentators, among whose labours are most notable, Petri Severini, *Idea Medicinæ Philosophiæ*. Bas. 1571; Mic. Toxetis, *Onomastica*. Arg. 1574; Dornei, *Dict. Parac. Franc.* 1584; and Pi. *Philosæ. Compendium cum scholiis auctore Leone Suavio*. Paris. (This last, a good book.)

(5) A disgraceful affair. One Liechtenfels, a canon, having been rescued *in extremis* by the "*laudanum*" of Paracelsus, refused to come down with the stipulated fee, and was supported in his meanness by the authorities, whose interference Paracelsus would not brook. His own liberality was allowed by his bitterest foes, who found a ready solution of his indifference to profit in the aforesaid sword-handle and its guest. His freedom from the besetting sin of a profession he abhorred (as he curiously says somewhere, "*Quis quæso deinceps honorem deferat professione tali, quæ à tam facinorosis nebulonibus obitur et administratur?*") is recorded in his epitaph, which affirms—"Bona sua in pauperes distribuenda collocandaque erogavit" honoravit, or ordinavit—for accounts differ.







